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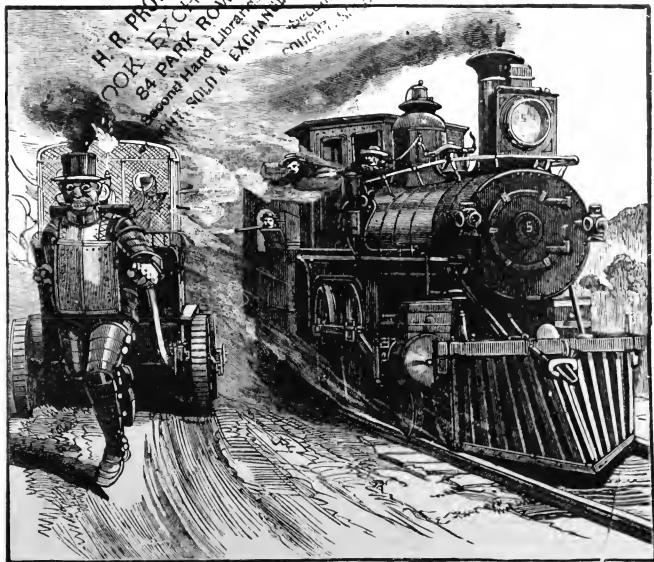
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## Frank Reade, Jr.

With His New Steam Man in Texas; or,  
CHASING THE TRAIN ROBBERS.

By "NONAME."



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# FRANK READE, JR.,

## With His New Steam Man in Texas;

### OR,

## CHASING THE TRAIN ROBBERS.

By "NONAME."

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr., With His New Steam Man in Central America," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER I. THE TRAIN ROBBERY.

"GREAT heavens! what a terrible wrong has been done Jack Fair. Why, I will swear that he is as honest and true a young man as this country holds."

Frank Reade, Jr., widely known as a distinguished inventor, uttered these words in an impressive manner. He was a dark, handsome type of young man, with smooth face and fearless brown eyes. He was at the moment sitting in the molding department of the extensive works owned by him, and devoted wholly to the manufacture of his inventions.

Near him stood a short, broad-shouldered son of the Emerald Isle, whose chief characteristics were his geniality and even temper.

His name was Barney O'Shea, and for many years he had been in the employ of Frank Reade, Jr.

"Be me sowl, Mither Frank," exclaimed Barney, in surprise, "phwativer is the matter now?"

"Why, there's the dence to pay!" exclaimed Frank Reade, Jr., excitedly, as he held a newspaper in his hand.

"Shure, Mither Frank, yes have the best av me intirely. Phwativer do ye mean? Has there been another earthquake in Parlyment or an eruption in Oireland?"

"I'm not triding, Barney."

"Nayther am I, sor."

"Listen to this."

Frank held the newspaper up and began to read:

"A most daring train robbery in Texas. The express messenger tied to a chair while the safe is opened and fifty thousand dollars in bank-notes is extracted. Identity of the robbers unknown. Arrest of the messenger, Jack Fair, who is believed to have been in league with the robbers and to have admitted them to the car. Theory that the tying of the messenger to the chair was only a ruse. Fair held in twenty thousand dollars. Detectives busy on the case."

More followed, detailing the particulars of the train robbery. Frank read it through and Barney listened with interest.

"There!" cried Frank, when he had finished. "There is the unjust part of it to arrest an innocent messenger, who did his best to defend the car."

"But shure there must be some good reason or they'd never have arrested him, sor," said Barney.

"There was no good reason," protested Frank. "I tell you I know Jack Fair. He was a schoolmate of mine, and I am ready to swear to his honesty."

"Shure, it's a shame thin."

"Of course it is. I declare, I feel as if I ought to help Jack in some way," said Frank, arising and pacing the floor.

Barney finally went to another part of the shop.

He had barely disappeared when another person entered the room.

He was a negro, black as a coal, but with as good genial a face as one would wish to look upon.

"Marse Frank, I've done hung yo' de aff'noon extra," said Pomp, which was the darky's name. "I fink it likely yo' would 'ike to see it."

"You are right, I would," replied Frank, eagerly. "Is it the Times, Pomp?"

"I fink it an, sah."

"All right, may want you in a moment. Be with in call."

"A'right, sah."

Pomp retired into an ante-room.

Frank took up the extra edition of the Readetown Times, and almost the first thing his gaze rested upon was the following glaring caption:

"MORE ABOUT THE TEXAS TRAIN ROBBERY."

"Young Frank is held as an accessory. President Young of the Texas Express Company vows that he has proof to convict the young messenger. Great sensation in Pecan City."

"LATEN!"

"The Post Office Department at Washington are satisfied that this is the same gang that robbed the mail car last November, and have decided to offer a reward of twenty thousand dollars for the capture and conviction of the robbers. This is official from Washington."

Frank laid the paper down, and drew a deep breath. He paced the floor back and forth a few times, and then picked up his hat.

Leaving the shop, he made his way out upon one of the principal streets of the town. Readetown had been founded by Frank's father who was a noted inventor himself, though now too old to travel as once had been his wont.

Frank made his way to a telegraph office. The operator placed a blank before him, and he wrote the following message:

"TO THE POLICE JUSTICE OF PECAN CITY, TEXAS:

"I will go bail for Jack Fair to any amount. I will send sureties and bond by next mail properly attested. FRANK READE, JR."

The next day the newspapers contained the statement that Frank Reade, Jr., had volunteered to go bail for the young express mes-

senger who was charged with complicity in the train robbery.

This gave the case only a new interest and everybody at once began to comment upon the ill-advised move of the famous inventor. But Frank only smiled grimly.

"I know Jack Fair too well!" he declared. "I would trust him with my life."

Released on bail Jack Fair wrote to Frank thanking him for his kindness.

"There is but one more thing you could do to increase my love and respect for you," he wrote, "and that is to come down here with your Steam Man and hunt down these villainous transgressors. They will yet do much harm if their career is not cut short."

Frank folded the letter and pursed his lips meditatively.

"I don't know but that Jack is right," he declared. "I've a good mind to go."

But Frank's wife was not quite ready to agree to this.

She was always averse to having her dear husband go upon such perilous expeditions. It would mean a dangerous encounter with rough men and possibly Frank might lose his life in the attempt.

But this matter was when an incident occurred which decided him to act.

The newspapers came out one morning with another startling headline.

Beneath it was an account of the wrecking of a train, the robbery of a mail car and the loss of many lives.

Troops had been sent to the scene, bands of Vigilantes had been formed, but Mike Hossely and his gang were able to bid them all defiance.

At this juncture, one day a young man alighted from the train at Readetown, accompanied by a stern-visaged man of middle age, a type of Westerner.

"Drive us to the residence of Frank Reade, Jr.," they said, as they entered a carriage.

The cabman complied, and a few moments later the two strangers alighted at the steps of Readetown's most palatial residence.

They were shown into a rich drawing-room, and their cards were taken.

Upon one was the name, "Jack Fair," upon the other, "James Rollin."

In a few moments Frank Reade, Jr., entered the room. He greeted Jack Fair's hand, with tears in his eyes, saying:

"You don't know how glad I am to see you, Jack. I hear that you have been acquitted of the heinous charge against you."

"I have, Frank, owing to your great kindness in furnishing me bail and sending your own private lawyer to me. I never can fully repay you."

"I knew that you were innocent," declared Frank, and then looked at Jack's companion.

"Mr. James Rollin, this is Mr. Reade," said young Fair in introduction. "Frank, Mr. Rollin has come to you upon rather a doubtful errand. He represents the part of the country infested by Mike Mosely's gang. Soldiers and Vigilantes have been unable to cope with them. Now we are sure that with your New Steam Man you can hunt them down and bring them to justice. He has a petition signed by a thousand representative men of that part of Texas. What do you think of it?" Frank took the petition and glanced over it. It seemed for a moment affected deeply. Then he replied:

"Indeed, Mr. Rollin, I fear your people place to high an estimate upon my humble services. I hardly know how to answer you, except to repeat what I have many times before repeated, that myself and my inventions are at the service of those who are oppressed, or in the subverting of the ends of justice."

"Hurrah!" cried Jack Fair, wildly. "I knew you would consent, Frank."

"Mr. Reade," said Rollin, with deep emotion, "you will have the lifelong gratitude of all the people of Pecan City and Lone Pine if you succeed in destroying that gang of cut-throats."

"I cannot agree to do it," replied Frank, firmly, "but I will try."

"I wish to say further," continued Rollin, "that any pecuniary remuneration you may desire will be met by the people of that region."

"I ask for no remuneration," replied Frank, "beyond a stated sum for the covering of the expenses of my work," and my two secretaries, Barney and Pomp.

"It shall be as you desire," said Rollin, warmly. "When will you undertake your task?"

"Within three days."

"Good!"

"It has been my experience that if the leaders of a train-robbing gang are arrested or shot, the gang itself is easily broken up."

"You are right."

"Therefore I shall attempt first of all to corner Mike Mosely. Once he is in my power I will consider the crusade well begun."

"You will succeed, Mr. Reade," replied Rollin, warmly. "I suppose this wonderful Steam Man is a great invention. I have never seen it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Frank, "then I shall be very glad to show it to you."

"I shall be happy to see the wonder!"

"Come this way. You will go, too, Jack?"

"Of course I will," replied young Fair. The two visitors followed Frank to the door. They did not wait for a carriage, but as it was only a short distance walked down to the shops.

Entering the yard Frank hailed Barney who was just going out.

"Barney," he said, "I am going to Texas with the Steam Man to hunt down the train robbers. I want you and Pomp to be ready to go in twenty-four hours."

The Celt was electrified. "Whurroo!" he shouted. "Do you mean that? Mither Frank an' me, I'll be ready in less time now than you shan't depend upon it. It's delighted we'll be to be after takin' another trip in the New Steam Man."

Frank lead the way to a high-roofed building with large swinging doors and glass skylights overhead.

"Gentlemen," he said, warmly, "I take great pleasure in introducing you to the New Steam Man."

## CHAPTER II.

### ON TO TEXAS.

JACK FAIR and Rollin, the Texan, gazed with wonderment upon the most marvellous piece of machinery they had ever set eyes upon.

The Steam Man was before them.

The wonderful walking man of steam, whom many believed existed only as a myth, was before their eyes.

He was the imitation of a giant, made in steel. With driving-rods to regulate the movement of the legs at his knees, and carrying the shafts of a large iron wagon in his powerful hands.

A thorough and careful explanation of the mechanism of the New Steam Man was made by Frank.

The visitors listened with interest.

"The furnace, you will find, is carried in

the Man's chest," said Frank, explanatively. "The gauge, steam indicator and steam chest are upon his back."

"The legs are the cylinders and controlled by driving-rods. The boiler, or cylinder, is in the upper part of the legs and the abdomen."

"You will see that the tall hat which he wears is the smoke pipe. A whistle is in his mouth."

"He carries the shafts of the wagon in his hands. There are huge spikes upon his feet to enable him to walk upon the rails."

"You see, to control the Steam Man, it is only necessary to use the reins, which pass through this aperture in the front of the wagon, which open and close the throttle or the whistle valve."

"The wagon has four wheels with grooved tires of iron. The body of the wagon is of iron plates. Over the iron is the cage or netting of finest steel, and capable of resisting a rifle ball."

"There are loopholes in this netting to fire through. The entrance is by a door in the rear. The coal is carried in bunkers in the side of the wagon."

"You will see that the interior of the wagon is fitted up with all the necessary appliances for living a long while in it. I think this explains the entire mechanism of the New Steam Man."

"And I am sure," said Fair, "that you can express their wonder at, and admiration of the wonderful invention."

"It far surpasses any other invention of these modern times," said Rollin.

"That's so," affirmed Fair.

"Indeed, Mr. Reade, I wish we could go with you in the wagon."

"That would be hardly possible," replied Frank, with a smile.

"Oh, we will not press the point," rejoined the Texan, jocularly. "Well, Mr. Reade, our work will go with you."

"Thank you. I feel that I shall surely succeed."

A half hour later Fair and Rollin were driven back to the depot to take a return train.

A tremendous excitement was created in Reade's town when it was known that Frank Reade, Jr., would undertake the capture of the train robbers.

"I tell you he will succeed," declared one of the town's admirers, warmly. "He has not yet failed."

Frank went at once to make preparations for the journey.

The Steam Man was taken apart in sections, and prepared for shipment to Pecan City.

Arrived there, Frank intended to reconstruct the Man and then start at once on the trail.

Barney and Pomp were wildly enthusiastic over the affair.

The Irishman and the African were the warmest of friends in reality, though given to continual wrangling and skylarking.

Each were never happy unless playing jokes upon the other.

Barney had been engaged in packing a part of the Steam Man.

Pomp had some greasy swabs in his hand when he had been wiping some of the bearings.

"I say, ye good for nothin' naygur," yelled Barney, "Fhwy don't ye worrout a bit! Ye say so, so yer that's ye, ye ain't care, ye will grow to the bed some wan av those foine mornings."

Pomp sniffed contemptuously at this declaration.

"Giong, you no count Irishman. You're no good for anythin'. If you lived in de South the wouldn't ye go to de alligators."

"Bejabers, ye're right, for I wouldn't live there."

"Ob co'se ye wdn't. Dat am a good reason why."

Barney snatched his head a bit.

"Phwat?"

"Dat am it!"

Whizz! bang! The greasy swab he took the Celt fairly under the jaw.

Barney turned a half somersault, got one of the swabs in his mouth, nearly choked with the grease, and altogether was badly used up.

He sprang to his feet, as mad an Irishman as ever the sun shone on.

"Whurroo!" he yelled. "I'll break the back av ye for that, naygur!"

He dashed at Pomp full tilt.

A bucket of dirty soap stood near.

Barney lifted it and hurled its contents at the ducky.

Pomp scrambled to get out of the way, but it was no use.

The slope descended upon him and for a moment he was nearly floated away in them.

Gasping, gurgling, and choking he was upon his feet in an instant.

"Bejabers, take that, ye sn-n-burned tarrier!" yelled Barney, picking up a mop and rubbing it upon the wagon.

"K! da, look out fo' 'owet, 'liah!"

Pomp lowered his head like a battering ram. He met Barney full tilt in the stomach.

He came down with a thud and an agonizing loss of breath.

So far as he was concerned the battle was ended.

Pomp might have wreaked further vengeance, but at this moment Frank Reade, Jr., appeared upon the scene.

The skylarkers slunk away to clean themselves up, and avoid a jawing by their employer.

The Steam Man was quickly packed and made ready for the trip.

The trainload of weapons and equipments of all kinds were stored in the wagon.

In just two days the arrangements were made complete.

Barney and Pomp and Frank Reade, Jr., boarded a special train for Texas.

But they were not destined to reach Pecan City without a little rough experience.

Of course, the train robbers themselves must necessarily hear of the contemplated expedition of the Steam Man.

It happened that a dark browed man of most suspicious appearance had been hanging about the depot while the Steam Man was being put aboard the cars.

Barney noticed him once and even went so far as to call Frank's attention to him.

But the young inventor only replied: "I don't believe there is any harm in him. At least, we have seen none yet."

So the matter dropped.

The special train made a rapid run until well over the Texas line.

Here they were obliged to switch off onto a branch road in order to reach Pecan City.

After leaving the junction of the railroads the special ran for a dozen miles at a moderate rate of speed.

Then the door of the car flew open and the conductor in charge rushed in.

He was as pale as a ghost, and cried hoarsely:

"Gentlemen, we have got to stop the train. The track is barricaded ahead. It is the work of Mike Mosely's men."

"What!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., leaping to his feet. "Are we into the robbers' territory?"

"Well, you see, sir," sputtered the terrified conductor, "he has probably heard of your coming here with the Steam Man to fight him, and he means to cut ye off."

"Oh, that's the game, eh?" cried Frank, with a slight smile. "Well, run to the junction, then."

"Ah, sir, but they are ripping up the rails just behind us. I fear that we cannot get by them."

Frank saw the perils of the situation at a glance.

He knew that something desperate had got to be done.

It would never do to let the Man fall into the hands of the train robbers, first off.

It was strange that he had not been warned of this danger, but he was in for it and made quick action.

Frank sprang to the front door of the passenger coach.

It was an Irishman, a private car chartered for the occasion.

Barney and Pomp. Besides the Pullman car there was the car in which the Steam Man was packed.

Frank threw open the front door of the car.

He saw a number of mounted men riding alongside him.

The train was rapidly slowing up. The engine was reversing the lever to bring it to a halt.

There was no other move to make, for the track was barricaded ahead. The leader of the mounted men, a tall, heavy framed man with a black mask, was aiming a rifle at the engineer.

It was this which would prevent the engineer from starting the train back again and Frank realized it.

He acted quick and without saying a word to anybody.

He leaned forward and pulled the couplings of the car and the tender. There was a jerk, the air-brake tubes parted and Frank brought the common brake to bear to check the speed of the train.

In a moment there were fifty yards between the engine and the train.

At first Frank had thought of holding the train still and making a brave fight through the car windows with the train robbers.

But by the quick sagging of the car he saw at once with a thrill that they were upon a high grade.

The grade also extended down toward the junction. The car halted and Frank loosening the brake it began to move backward down the grade.

The train robbers saw the move and with a yell came on to the attack.

Four of them reached the car platform, but Frank stood there like a rock with his revolver and exchanged shots with them.

Two of the robbers were shot. The bullets whistled all about Frank's head.

"Golly, Marne Frank!" cried Pomp; "come in or you'll get shot."

Frank concluded that it would be wiser to seek the cover of the car, and stepped inside the door.

The fight was now kept up through the car windows. The robbers tried desperately to board the train.

But it had gained too much headway on the down grade.

In a few moments it was running at full tilt a sixty-mile clip. Then a yell came from the conductor.

"Put on the brakes!" shouted the cowardly fellow. "They're pulling up the rails back of us."

Frank looked down the grade and saw that a gang of the train robbers were engaged in driving the spikes in the rails.

If they succeeded in loosening one rail before the train reached the spot it meant death to all on board.

## CHAPTER III.

### A FIGHT WITH MOOSELY'S GANG.

FRANK READE, JR., was cool in times of danger. This was never a time in his life when he stood in need of nerve better than now.

Quietly and coolly he watched the operation of the train robbers.

They were loosening the spikes. It was a question of time as to whether they would succeed in removing the rail in time to wreck the train.

The train was rapidly nearing the spot.

At a mile a minute clip it neared the gang of workers. A loud and baffled yell went up from them.

Then the train struck the loosened rail. Probably not half a dozen spikes held it in place.

Like a flash the fleeing car struck the rail. There was a slight swaying as the rail yielded a trifle.

Then a cheer went up from Barney and Pomp.

The passage had been made.

Frank sprang out upon the platform and seized the brake to steady the flying car around a curve just ahead.

There was no doubt but that the train would keep on going until the junction was reached.

Here they would be safe, and Frank decided to unload the Steam Man here and proceed to Pecan City with it over the road or the prairie.

When the wild train came flying down over the rails to the junction, the astonishment of the people there gathered was greater than words can express.

They stood open-mouthed as the cars rolled up to the depot.

Frank and the conductor, who had now regained his courage somewhat, were at the brakes.

The cars were brought to a standstill, and then the passengers leaped out.

Of course an explanation had to be made. A sensation was created.

"Wall, that was a cute trick of Moosely's I,

saw," said one lank Texan. "I'd advise ye to look out for him, strangers."

"I intend not only to look out for him, but to look for him," said Frank, grimly.

"So is the Steam Man," said one of the lank, hard cut, strangers.

There was plenty of willing hands to help in the unloading of the Steam Man.

While thus engaged, and the work of putting the pieces together was going on, the locomotive came in.

The engineer pale and terrified leaped down out of the cab.

"Tell ye I done drivin' on this kind of a line," he declared, positively. "I'm goin' back East again."

"What did Moosely say to ye?" asked the conductor, who had played such a cowardly part.

"He didn't say much 'cept to tell me to stop hereafter when he hung out a sign, an' when I had money aboard. It's lucky for that covey what was aboard the Fullman that he didn't fall into Mike's hands."

"Perhaps it was," said Frank, brusquely, answering the remark, "but it's an unlucky day for him when I came to this region."

"So is the Steam Man," said the engineer, incredulously. "Mike is a bad man."

"Well, I'm not afraid of him," retorted Frank, which was wiser than half of you might expect to hear."

"That's so!" chimed in one of the crowd, and a laugh followed.

The engineer, however, pulled a bit of paper from his pocket and handed it to Frank.

"Here's something Mike told me to hand to you," he said.

Frank took the slip quietly and glanced at it.

Upon it, in an irregular hand, there was scrawled the following:

"To FRANK READE, JR.:

"So you're the bloke what has come West to do up Mike Moosely. All right. I'm glad to welcome a fellow's fair warning. There's to be another tenderfoot funeral in Pecan City afore a week. Mark the word."

"Yours truly,

"MIKE MOOSELY."

"Well, Mike," said Frank with a laugh, as he tore the paper to bits, "you are more of a fighting man than you are a scholar. All right, we will settle the dispute in the near future, and you shall have cause to remember it."

The Steam Man was now hastily beginning to show shape.

A wondering crowd was gathered about; none of them had ever seen anything of the kind before.

It was certainly an object of very great wonder.

It took several hours to put the Steam Man together all complete.

But finally the last rivet was driven and the last nut tightened. Then Frank said to Barney:

"Get up steam just as quickly as you can. We want to leave here at once."

"All right, Mither Frank,"

Barney soon had a fire roaring in the furnace. The boiler was quietly filled with water from a creek near.

Then steam was quickly gotten up.

The Steam Man stood puffing and ready for service.

The three voyagers, Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp sprang into the wagon.

The door in the fly screen was shut, and then Frank took the throttle reins in one hand and placed the other upon the guiding brake of the wagon.

The Steam Man let out a piercing whistle and then started away at a long loping stride.

The spectacle was a wonderful one to the people about, and a great cheer went up.

It was answered by those in the cage, and then the Steam Man rapidly left the border village behind.

The thought of following the railroad track closely, in the hopes of meeting Moosely and his gang.

In this he was rewarded.

As the Steam Man neared the vicinity of the town of Pecan City, Barney suddenly sprang up.

"Bejars, Mither Frank, there they are, the hull lot of 'em. On me worried they're comin' for the train."

This was true enough.

A body of men, some fifty in number, came

galloping down over the plain toward the Steam Man.

Frank now resorted to tactics to defeat the villainous horde.

He knew that if the whole gang should succeed in surrounding the Steam Man, they might possibly break some of the delicate machinery and the battle would go against them.

But he knew better than to come to close quarters.

The Steam Man was capable of outfooting the fleetest horse.

Frank glanced over the plain and laid his course.

He bore off a little to the southward now. This brought Moosely's gang somewhat in his rear.

They came thundering after the Steam Man. Frank held the man steady and then said:

"Now, Barney, you and Pomp may try your aim. Make every shot count."

"A'right, Marne Frank."

"Bejars, we'll parlay 'em."

The two eager men sought the loopholes and began to fire at the distant gang.

The first shots were within easy range and every shot told.

Barney and Pomp could work the eighteen-shot Winchester very rapidly.

The train was now to fall one by one.

They yelled madly and also opened fire, but the bullets rattled harmlessly against the steel cage.

It required some time and the loss of a dozen men for the train robbers to come to their senses and realize that the Steam Man was too much for them.

Barney and Pomp had not received a single scratch.

It was easy for the Steam Man to maintain an easy distance before the horses, and they could not gain upon him, ply whip and spur as they would.

It was now near sunset.

A perfect fusillade was kept up by Barney and Pomp. It was fearfully destructive to the train robbers.

Their horses were also wounded, and they were obliged to pull up in sheer desperation.

But they had not seen the limit of their humiliation.

The man now began to steam very swiftly about them in a circle, keeping at the uniform distance of a couple of furlongs.

Barney and Pomp continued to pour in a heavy fire.

There seemed how nothing but ignominious retreat or total destruction for the train robbers.

In sheer desperation they rode in a scattered line for the hills near.

Into these they dashed among rocky passes where the Steam Man could not follow.

They disappeared with savage and baffled yells.

It was a signal victory for the Steam Man. Barney and Pomp cheered with a will.

"Bejars, an we didn't do thins up folse, thin I'll threat," cried Barney.

"Golly, dat am a'ac," put in Pomp. "We kin jes lick dat tribe any time."

But they were not to be so satisfied.

As nothing more would likely be seen of the train robbers that night, Frank decided to run for Pecan City at once.

"I think we'd better start before morning," he declared. "It will be moonlight and a straight course over the plains."

So the Steam Man headed for Pecan City. But before midnight the moon was obscured by clouds and they were compelled to camp.

When daylight first appeared the journey was resumed. In a few hours the Steam Man descended into the valley among the hills and came in sight of the Texas city.

It was a collection of buildings which in the East would hardly have passed for a respectable village.

But a few acres of land, diversified into streets, may constitute a city in the far West, where views on all subjects are much more elastic and liberal than in the effete East.

"So dat am Pecan City," said Pomp, with a shade of disappointment in his voice.

"Hini 'tain't much of a city as I can see."

"Bejars, it's becase ye're color-blind, naygur," declared Barney. "It is not juss luk a bit sharper, yes you could see the city."

"Dat may be so," returned Pomp, "but jes de same, I ain't been convinced yet."

However, the Steam Man kept on, and soon entered the streets of the little Texan metropolis.

The people came out in a great crowd to welcome the Steam Man.

The man and his passengers were objects of much interest and curiosity.

But through the crowd suddenly two men hastily pushed.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw them, and at once recognized them as Rollin and Fair.

He stepped down from the cage pleasantly to meet them, but was surprised to see how pale and agitated both looked.

They pressed forward and gripped the young inventor's hand.

"We are glad to welcome you to Pecan City," Mr. Reade said Fair, with much warmth of manner.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A DARING ACT.

"You may be sure of meeting with a right royal reception, Mr. Reade," said Rollin, earnestly. "The people of the West are never known to shirk hospitality."

"I am very favorably impressed with the people and with Pecan City," said Frank, with politeness.

"We heard of your little affair up the road," said young Fair. "And we exit in it."

"You were lucky in not falling into Mosely's hands," said Rollin. "You certainly acted in a piquey manner."

"I had no idea whatever of falling into the villain's hands if I could help it," said Frank, modestly.

"There is no doubt but that you can give Mike a good whipping at any time."

"I shall try it."

"But we have come not only to welcome you kindly," said Rollin, "but to apprise you of a terrible affliction which has befallen us."

"Ludeed!" exclaimed Frank, with not a little of surprise. "What can that be?"

"I have a daughter," continued Rollin, "and she is the light of my life. Indeed, I have never thought of giving her up even to Jack here without pain. But, God help me, it is hard to bear. She has been snatched away from me by cruel and evil hands."

"What!" exclaimed Frank with horror. "Do you mean kidnapped?"

"I do."

"That is horrible!"

"I see that you appreciate my position. I am quite unnerved and my heart is full of burning."

Frank's eyes flashed.

All the chivalric impulses of his nature were roused.

He could never hear of wrong being done one of the gentler sex without a strong desire or impulse to go to their relief.

"Who has stolen your daughter away?" he asked, briefly.

"I believe it was Mike Mosely. He knows that I was the most bitter enemy he had in those parts and that it was through me that you have come here. I believe his motives are revengeful."

"Indeed! So this bold train robber makes war upon women," said Frank, contemptuously. "I shall know how to deal with such a villain."

"Oh, Frank!" said Jack Fair, in a low, tense voice, "you will rescue her, I feel sure. I will never cease to bless you!"

"I will certainly do it if it is in my power," replied Frank.

"I know that it is."

"But in what manner was the abduction made?"

"It happened in this way," said Rollin, with quivering voice: "While we were absent at Reedstown to see you, the villain Mosely, by means of a forged letter, decoyed Katie to the house of a stern woman, whom she has been kind to in a charitable way. Mosely was secreted near, and with several of his men seized Katie and forcibly took her away. I have been unable to get any clue as to her whereabouts since."

"It was an infamous thing to do!" declared Frank, hotly. "Have no fears, gentlemen; I will rescue the young lady or break something in the attempt!"

The people of Pecan City vied with each other in showing their distinguished visitors hospitality.

They were feted and dined, and there was no denying the honor.

Frank stood a day and night of this.

Then he realized that it was necessary to get to work at once.

An opportunity presented itself.

It was known that a through train from Austin, containing gold to the amount of thousands of dollars, would pass that day over this branch of the railroad and through Pecan City.

Everybody was on the tip-toe of excitement. It was firmly believed that this train would be held up by Mosely.

Accordingly, Frank made preparations to frustrate the designs of the robbers.

He had arranged that the train, on leaving Pecan City, should carry armed men.

It should proceed at a slow rate of speed to the junction with the main line.

The Steam Man was to run alongside the train across the prairie, which was for fifty miles, as hard and smooth as a floor.

This, it was believed, would be a sufficient guard to intimidate the train robbers and cause the treasure safely through.

Accordingly, an armed band of Vigilantes were at the station waiting for the train at the appointed hour.

The Steam Man was at a point below the station, and where a clear course could be assured.

Thus matters were when a loud shout went up that the train was coming.

It rolled into the depot in a few moments. There were but three passengers aboard.

The mail car was closed and locked, and the express car was inspected.

The express car was the same. Into the passenger coach the Vigilantes had started to climb, when a thrilling thing occurred.

Suddenly a sharp, quick whistle went up from across the depot yard.

Then the astonished mob of spectators were disunited to witness a *coup-de-main*, the issue of which for daring could hardly be conceived.

Across the yard, coming from no one knew where, there came a gang of armed men.

Fierce, desperate fellows they were.

They were led by a powerful framed man with heavy whiskers.

It was Mike Mosely.

This startling appearance of the redoubtable train robber and his daring gang right in the heart of Pecan City was so astonishing, that for a moment the crowd gaped in wonderment and terror.

The Vigilantes were stupefied. This aided the daring villains.

This delay proved fatal.

The train robbers reached the train. Quick as a flash revolvers were pulled and a volley fired at the Vigilantes.

Six men fell beneath that fire.

The Vigilantes taken so suddenly off their guard fell back.

The train robbers were in an instant aboard the train.

The conductor and the three passengers fled for their lives.

The fireman leaped from the cab, and two stalwart robbers hurried the engineer after him.

A volley swept into the dense crowd and the robbers to retreat in terror.

The throttle was flung open and the train leaped forward.

A desperate attempt was made to gain the lead of the number of the Vigilantes.

But they failed to do so.

Mike Mosely's daring move proved a brilliant success.

A number of the city fled the treasure train, completely in the power of the train robbers.

This most daring and unheard-of piece of recklessness was never equaled in any part of the world before.

The excitement of the people of Pecan City cannot be expressed in words.

They were simply frantic.

Yet Mosely seemed to hold the winning card, and there was no way to defeat or thwart him, as it seemed.

To be sure there were men in the mail and express cars, locked in, and they would resist to the last.

But it would be an easy matter for Mosely to run out on the prairie and ditch the train.

It would then be impossible for the detectives to follow the foot line.

Of course quick action was made in the depot as soon as it was seen that Mosely had succeeded in getting away with the train.

Another train was the only one that could be sent after the first.

"Go after Mosely. Give him a hot pursuit! He must be overtaken!"

But it required some time to get out a special.

When it did come it was quickly filled with armed Vigilantes, and it sped away, in pursuit.

But the train robbers would have had plenty of time to have ditched the train and made away with the treasure before the special could overtake them.

This was certain, as every one would agree. There was some reflection, however, which was a bit of comfort to many.

The Steam Man had been waiting on level ground beyond.

Frank and Barney and Pomp had seen the daring move of Mosely, without being able to prevent it.

But there was one thing they could do, and Frank acted quickly.

As the express came thundering along, Frank pulled the Steam Man's throttle wide open.

The Man leaped forward like a thing of life.

The next moment the Man and the express were running side by side.

In a flash of time they had swept through the pass and out upon the prairie.

The robber engineer saw the Steam Man alongside and smiled.

He piled on more steam expecting to easily outrun the train.

But the ground was now as level and hard as a floor.

On such a course the Steam Man was capable of attaining a frightful rate of speed.

He kept up with the express without much apparent trouble.

But now an exciting battle began.

It was a sort of running fight as it were. The train robbers all leaned out of the car windows and began to fire at the men in the cage.

Of course their bullets rattled harmlessly against the impervious setting.

Barney and Pomp, on the other hand, began firing in return.

Their shots told with a vengeance, for the outlaws were hit in windows and upon the platforms were an easy mark.

The armed guards in the express and mail cars did not participate, for they could not get the train.

It was a thrilling sight, this novel running fight along the railroad track.

Words cannot do it justice.

But the train started ahead, clearly to lay with our friends aboard the Steam Man.

Every shot they fired seemed to count.

Now and then a train robber fell back dead as one of the bullets sped true to the mark.

Mike after mile was covered.

In vain the robber engineer tried to shake off the pursuers.

He might as well have spared himself the trouble. The Steam Man hung on with relentless persistence.

On and on they sped.

Still the incendiary light was kept up. The outlaws in vain tried to pierce the steel cage with their bullets.

But the mad run could not last forever. The point at which it was necessary for Mosely to stop the train and attempt to carry off the treasure.

The train began to slow up.

It was also that the Steam Man.

Barney and Pomp were at the loop-holes with their rifles, while Frank was at the dauber. It was evident that the critical moment had arrived.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE TRAIN ROBBER DEFEATED.

MOSLEY had noted the case with which the Steam Man kept up with the train.

He saw the utility of trying to shake off the dread pursuer, and cursed loud and deep dropped from his lips.

"Confound that man Reade!" he hissed. "I'll lay for him and I'll have his heart's blood yet!"

But threats are harmless missiles.

Frank at least was not injured by this one. The train slowed up, and so did the Steam Man. At length both were at a standstill.

Then Mosely conceived an idea to protect his men.

He unloaded them upon the opposite side of the car.

There was an embankment here, which served as an admirable break-work.

The bullets from the Steam Man could not reach them, but they were now exposed to the fire of the armed guard in the mail and express cars.

Had these cars been open to the train robbers, there was a possibility that they might have escaped with the booty.

But unfortunately for them these cars were closely sealed.

Moseley began to foresee the possibility of defeat, and it infuriated him.

"Curse 'em!" he yelled; "break open that car an' kill every mother's son of 'em."

The train robbers made an attack upon the treasure car.

But they were strongly barricaded and resisted the best efforts to break them open.

Here was an exigency which the robbers had not anticipated.

They had confidently believed that it would be the easiest kind of work to compel the defenders of the mail car to surrender.

But this proved far from being the case.

They made a stubborn resistance, and the difficulty of breaking into the cars was at once apparent.

Moseley was furious and swore like a trooper, urging his men on.

But they were mercifully cut down by the steady fire of the men in the cars.

Thus matters were when Frank Reade, Jr., conceived of a daring plan to outwit the robbers.

He ran the Steam Man up alongside the engine.

It would have been an easy matter to shoot the robbers in the mail car, who, however, saw their peril and leaped.

"Now, Pomp," said Frank, quickly, "here is a job for you."

"A' right, Mars Frank," cried the darky, with alacrity. "What am I?"

"I want you to get aboard the locomotive and run down to the junction with the train."

Both Barney and Pomp saw the idea in a jiffy.

It would be turning the tables on the train robbers in good fashion.

They were all out of the passenger coach now, and trying hard to force their way into the mail car.

"Begorra, yes, you ought to let me have that job, Mither Frank," demanded Barney.

"Sho! Don't you do no such thing, Mars Frank. He am jes' a no 'count Irishman, anyway."

"Be me sowl, I'll tache ye manners fer that, naygur."

"Ye ain't afeard to do dat."

"Begorra, we'll see."

Barney would have called into Pomp then and there, but Frank interfered.

"No akylling now!" he said, sternly.

"Watch your chance, Pomp, and get aboard."

"A' right, Mars Frank."

Pomp went to the door in the cage and opened it a brief space.

At a moment when he knew the train robbers' attention was diverted he made a dash from the cage.

Up the embankment he flew.

Like a monkey he went into the locomotive cab.

It was but a moment's work to unlodge the brakes and pull open the throttle.

The train started forward with a jerk.

A mad yell went up from the train robbers. Moseley saw the game when it was too late to prevent it.

With a curse he started for the cab of the locomotive.

A shower of rifle bullets came into the cab.

But Pomp had foreseen this and occupied harm by casting himself upon the floor of the cab.

Faster and faster the train moved away. It was gaining speed every moment, and soon was flying along at a terrific rate.

The robbers were left upon the track, a shagreened and disgruntled pack of rascals.

Moseley was the maddest of all.

But his anger was futile, for the game was lost, and the \$50,000 treasure had slipped out of his grasp.

The Steam Man kept pace with the train for some miles.

Then Frank slowed up a bit.

When the train rolled into the junction station with Pomp at the throttle a mighty crowd was in wait to greet him.

The news of the seizure of the train had been telegraphed from Pecon City.

The news had created tremendous excitement at the junction, which was near the flourishing town of Lone Pine.

As Pomp brought the train to a stop, a cheering crowd rushed to the locomotive cab.

The armed guard in the mail and express cars came out and an explanation was given the crowd.

As soon as the accurate details of the affair were known the excitement became terrific.

Cheers were given Pomp and the brave defenders of the treasure.

The Steam Man and Frank Reade, Jr., were loudly cheered.

The name of Moseley was fiercely hissed.

Public sentiment ran high.

That the treasure had been safely brought over the branch line and successfully wrested from Moseley's hands was a feat never equalled in those parts before.

And the enthusiastic crowd meant that the plucky defenders should receive deserved encomiums of praise.

But at this juncture the Steam Man came up.

Barney and Frank came in for their share of the praise, and an admiring and wondering crowd surrounded the Steam Man.

"I tell ye that's the kind of an invention to parallel Mike Moseley with, cried one man to another.

"Texas," "I'll set my sombrero on the Steam Man."

"So will I, Bill."

"Hurrah for the Steam Man!"

These were the cries which went up, and had our voyagers from Readstown been at all susceptible to the emotion they might have felt somewhat inflated by such a flattering reception.

But Frank received all overtures with quiet reserve and dignity.

As soon as possible he proposed to return to Pecon City with the Steam Man.

Very soon the Southern Pacific express came thundering along on the main line.

The \$50,000 treasure was transferred to the mail car of the express.

There was no further danger of its becoming a prey to the enemy, as on the main line it would be safe and beyond the reach of such a lawless crew as Moseley's gang.

Now upon springing aboard the Steam Man, said Barney to Frank and Pomp.

"I jes' s'inks yo' am gwine back to Pecon City now, Mars Frank," asked Pomp, with a grin.

"A' right," replied Frank, "but not directly. I think it will be advisable to take a little run into the hills on the way back and see what we can accomplish towards rescuing Kootie Galtin."

"Bejabers, that's whut I say," cried Barney with readiness.

"Dat jes' suits dis cille," chimed in Pomp.

The Steam Man left Lone Pine Junction amid the cheers of the people.

Very soon the iron monster was spurning the prairie beneath its spiked heels.

A run along the railroad track was taken as far as the spot where the train had been held up.

Here the trail left by the robbers was found.

This was what Frank wanted.

It was quite discernible in the soft soil of the prairie.

Holding the Man down to a moderate pace Frank proceeded to follow it.

He could see no reason why it should not lead him direct to the stronghold of the train robbers.

It was yet early in the day and the trail was followed through a tract of the wilder country that Frank had ever seen in his life.

Rolling prairie, timber and rocky hills came in on the pass.

At length the trail led into a deep pass, which looked like the entrance to an inferno, and here it became lost.

It was futile to find it were unavailing. A clear space of ledge covered with flinty stones effectually concealed it.

After some search Frank decided to keep on the pass.

But now a puzzling problem confronted him. The pass here branched off in two directions. Which one to take was a question.

Frank was puzzled.

"What shall we do?" he asked Barney. "I am befogged."

"I'll tell yer how to settle it," said the Celt, solemnly. "I'll just gose wid it."

"How?" asked Frank, with an amused smile.

"Jist jip a cint over yer back an' which-

ever way it turns up go by it. Heads to the lift and tails to the right."

"All right," agreed Frank. "It shall be done."

A cent was produced and Frank tossed it over his shoulder as directed.

It fell with the head up.

"To the right!" cried Frank. "All aboard. To the right!"

"An' may luck go wid us," cried Barney, confidently.

So the Steam Man took the pass to the right, and the crowd followed for some way.

Upon either hand, for what seemed fifty a thousand feet in height, rose sheer walls of rock.

At times these so nearly merged above as to give one the impression that he was in a vast cavern.

The rocks assumed all sorts of grotesque and unreal forms.

Beasts of strange shape, profiles of marvellous accuracy were plainly seen.

Indeed, so much like petrified images did they look that Barney, who had an Irishman's superstition, began to evince fear.

"Bejabers, I'm thinkin' it's into some den of hobgoblins we are goin'!" he said, with a shiver. "Dat cuss to it, but no luck will come of enterin' here!"

"Very likely we shall see fairies before we go much further," laughed Frank. "Ah, Barney, you are a angel!"

But the words had not left Frank's lips when the Celt sprang up with white face and terrified manner, and pointing up the canyon, yelled:

"Bejabers, wud yez look at that! Be St. Patrick, we've run into a thrap av death!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### SUPERSTITIOUS FEAR.

BARNEY's words were startling, to say the least, but not more so than his manner.

Frank and Pomp were startled by them, and instantly turned their gaze up the canyon.

They beheld at that moment a thrilling sight.

It was easy to see that Barney had a good reason for his display of terror.

Along the edge of a precipice upon the canyon wall and fully two hundred feet from the bottom of the gorge was a most weird and uncanny sight.

What seemed like a procession of white human skeletons were walking along the verge.

They were visible but a moment, disappearing beyond a turn in the wall.

There was for a moment a disposition upon Frank's part to treat it as an optical illusion.

He rubbed his eyes briskly, and strove to dispel the incongruous vision.

But Barney and Pomp had both seen it and all the superstition of their ignorant minds asserted itself.

"Och bone, it's a warnin'!" cried Barney, in wailing tones. "The white skeletons, I never see it fail. Shure, wan av us is marked to die!"

"Golly sakes alibee!" cried Pomp, trembling like an aspen. "I jes' beleebe dat de debil am up dat pass!"

Barney sprang forward to seize the brake and turn the Steam Man about.

But Frank thundered:

"Let go of that, you coward!"

Barney obeyed implicitly, but he raised a voice of protest.

"Oh, Mither Frank!" he whimpered. "It will be death av we go any further up this place. Bad cuss to it, I say!"

"Yo' ain't gwine fo' to gib yo' se'up to de debil, Mars Frank!" pleaded Pomp.

Frank gazed into their honest faces and found them to be sincere.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "You are a plucky pair, and no mistake."

Oh, Mars Frank, we ain't 'fraid ob nuffin' dat am alibee. But we's a heap 'fraid ob ghostes!"

"Ghostes!" cried Frank, contemptuously; "don't talk that way. We have seen no ghost."

"I ax your parding, Mither Frank," said Barney, earnestly, "but didn't yez see them 'white skeletons' walkin' along the wall up there wherew a livin' man cndn't walk at all?"

"I saw them," said Frank, coolly, "but they are not ghostes."

"Dey am do berry nex' ting, Marce Frank!"

answered Pomp.

"Behaw!"

"Behawers, phwat air they thin?" asked Barney.

"Well," said Frank, slowly, "I am not prepared to say. But I am sure that when the matter is probed to the bottom, you will find that some human agency is at the bottom of it all."

Barney and Pomp made no further comment. They knew well when Frank was in earnest.

He would not brook opposition and in spite of their terror they were yet ready to obey his commands.

"What 'yo' want us fo' to do, Marce Frank?" asked Pomp.

"Just keep your courage for a while," said Frank, steadily.

He opened the throttle and let the Steam Man go ahead at a slow pace.

In this way they passed the spot where the skeletons had been seen.

But the pass now grew narrow and dark and dismal.

The walls seem ready to close in and crush the invaders.

Suddenly a bright vivid flash like lightning shot athwart the gorge. This was followed by what seemed like distant rumbling thunder.

Yet the sky was as clear and bright as could well be.

A wailing cry came from Barney, but a look from Frank restrained him.

The Steam Man went along slowly. Frank's curiosity was a bit excited, and he was determined to know the meaning of these supernatural exhibitions.

There was not a bit of doubt in his mind that it was all based upon some practical explanation and was mere chicanery.

He believed that Moseley and his gang employed these tricks to work upon the superstitious fears of the miners and plainmen.

That he might succeed well can be easily imagined, as the Western plainman, though courageous as a lion in most things, is powerfully superstitious.

The Steam Man crept along slowly. Suddenly another strange spectacle presented itself.

Upon the canyon wall several white robed figures were seen.

They looked like corpses in their grave clothes, and seemed to glide a moment along the cliff and then disappear.

Barney and Pomp were crouching in the bottom of the wagon.

Frank was cool and determined, yet he felt keenly that he was upon dangerous ground.

It suddenly occurred to him that he might, after all, have been a trifle reckless in entering the gorge.

It looked not a difficult matter for the train robbers to lay a trap for the Steam Man in this place.

Either end of the gorge might be held by a small body of men.

It would not be difficult to pen up the Man in this gorge, and Frank felt a bit nervous.

But he was one loathe to back out of an enterprise when once well started.

In fact, he could lose nothing more by going ahead at this stage than by going back.

So he decided to go ahead.

The figures in white were visible only a moment. Then another vivid flash of lightning lit up the gorge.

Barney and Pomp fairly yelled in their terror, but Frank kept steadily on.

But suddenly the young inventor threw his weight upon the brake and averted the Man to the left.

He was not a moment too soon.

Down from the edge of the cliff there fell a tremendous heavy boulder.

It narrowly missed the Steam Man and struck the bottom of the gorge with a crash.

It was a narrow escape.

Had it struck the Steam Man the result would have been fearful.

It would have been crushed out of all shape and those in the cage would have been killed.

That the stone had fallen of itself was possible.

That human agency was back of it all, Frank Reade, Jr., had no doubt. He believed that human hands had impelled that boulder over the cliff's edge.

And with that realization he began to fully appreciate the peril of his position.

To go further evidently would have been suicidal.

To turn about and seek a retreat was not incompatible with good sense and deep discretion.

Therefore Frank quickly turned the Steam Man about.

Pomp and Barney were overjoyed.

Frank had started the men sliding down the canyon. But at that moment the canyon became filled with strange, weird noises, hisses and groans, the air seeming alive with them.

Then the men finally ran out of the gorge again and upon the open plain, Barney and Pomp at last drew a breath of relief.

"Golly!" grunted Pomp. "Ain't jes' glad. Dey was a haunted place, jes' so such as you're a little, Marce Frank."

"Haunted beyond a doubt," said Frank, grimly. "but haunted by Mike Moseley and his gang."

But Barney and Pomp had their own ideas of the case, which were not to be shaken.

Frank, however, had no idea of giving up the quest.

He was determined at any cost to learn the meaning of the strange proceedings in the canyon.

He was satisfied that it was the entrance to the robbers' stronghold.

If it was the only entrance it did not seem as if he would be likely to gain admission very easily.

But he did not believe that it was. At least he was decided to look for another.

He had no fear of being attacked upon the open plain.

The train robbers had no doubt experienced all of that sort of thing that they cared to.

Barney and Pomp were now all right that they had got out of the haunted canyon.

"Golly! I jes' don' care fo' no livin' finders," declared Pomp, with a shrug of his shoulders, "but I jes' kain't fight wid' ghostes an' skeletons an' such fings. No, sah!"

"Behawers, I say that same," chimed in Barney. "I draw the line at the banshee."

Frank took a trip along the mountain side, looking for a good opportunity to enter the hills.

But he could see no better chance than that offered by the pass.

He was disappointed, he was quite undecided what to do.

But darkness was setting down thick and fast, and very soon Frank hit upon an idea.

He said that the darkness had become thick enough to mask his movements.

Then he ran the Steam Man to a secluded spot close under the mountain wall.

"Now, boys," he said, brusquely "which one of you is going up the haunted canyon with me?"

There was a dead silence.

This was a most startling question to ask, and the two servants were completely taken aback.

Neither one would have hesitated an instant under ordinary circumstances.

But the superstitious element had complete possession of them both.

"Begorra, av yes wud ask me to go anywhere wid' such darkness had become thick enough to mask his movements."

"That is not the point," said Frank, decisively. "Are you going or not?"

"Golly, Marce Frank, jes' yo' ink ob goin' up!" answered Barney.

"Phaw!" interrupted Frank. "What a poltroon set you are. But I can go alone. I would prefer to, only I thought I could shake some of the foolish superstition out of you."

This settled the question.

Devotion to their master was the prevailing quality of Barney and Pomp's natures.

They could not for one moment think of allowing him to go into a peril alone.

At once both sprang up.

"Begorra, I'll go, Mither Frank."

"Giv' don' yo' take him, Marce Frank. I'll go wif yo'."

Frank laughed at their seriousness and then said:

"Well, Barney, as long as you spoke first I will take you. Pomp, I charge you to look well after the Steam Man and wait here until I come back!"

"A'right, Marce Frank."

The young inventor fancied he detected a thrill of satisfaction in Pomp's tones at the prospect of being left behind.

But he said nothing, and armed to the teeth with Barney by his side he stepped out of the cage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN THE HAUNTED CANYON.

The darkness was most intense as Frank and Barney left the Steam Man.

The young inventor knew that he was incurring a great risk.

But there was no other course of procedure that he considered practicable open to him.

He was especially desirous of locating the hiding-place of Moseley.

He believed that the villain had there the young girl, Katie Rollin, in captivity.

To rescue her was Frank's earnest purpose.

Therefore the daring youth had determined to invade the haunted canyon by stealth, and, if possible, to learn its secrets.

He led the way along the mountain wall cautiously.

Barney followed him, all the while trying to stifle his superstitious fears.

A few moments later they reached the mouth of the pass.

Frank crept into it stealthily. He kept closely to the wall, and listened at intervals.

He adopted Indian tactics and kept a sharp lookout for signs. Up the canyon in this manner the two explorers went.

There was no doubt but that Barney was in a nervous state of mind.

At every juncture he expected fully to feel himself in contact with a ghost or a bogoblin.

But he would not have deserted his master for all that. Faithfulness was one of Barney's chief characteristics.

They had now proceeded some distance up the canyon, when Barney suddenly paused with a groan.

"Och hoo, wud yo' ink at the looks av that, Mither Frank!" the Celt whispered, pointing to a spot on the canyon wall.

Frank did not behold what was certainly a startling sight.

There upon a spur of the wall stood a white figure in a glare of greenish light.

The figure was robed in white from head to foot and seemed to swing the arms with regular motion.

To Barney it was a veritable ghost and he was convulsed with terror.

But to Frank it was an imposture, and he made quick action to dispel the illusion.

Quick as a flash he lifted his rifle and fired at the object.

The next moment there was a snapping sound, a distant muffled curse, and the figure came flying down into the canyon.

Frank sprang forward and was upon it in a moment.

But instead of a human being, as he had at first fancied it, he found only a heap of white muslin and a few sticks.

"Ahe!" cried Frank, triumphantly. "Come here, Mr. O'Shen, and see what sort of material your ghosts are made of. It is as I thought—a clever hoax."

Barney was astonished at the result, and not a little crestfallen.

"Be me sowl, yes are right, Mither Frank!" he muttered with amazement.

"You can see how easy it is to be deceived," continued Frank.

"On me worried, that's thrue," agreed Barney.

"Shure, it's a fool I've bin."

I hope this will cure you of being afraid of ghosts," said Frank, severely. "Ah, look out!"

The crack of a rifle smote upon the air, and the shot bored a hole through the visor of Frank's cap.

Both Barney and Frank sprang under the cliff wall.

Another shot followed, but it did not harm them.

"It is as I thought," said Frank, confidently. "The robbers have got up these devices to frighten ignorant people away from these hills."

But that was not all.

"Behawers, yer kin bet on that!" cried Barney, who was now as reliant as ever.

His fear of ghosts had all vanished.

Still on up the canyon they crept.

They had not got beyond the point where they had halted with the Steam Man, and

Frank was pushing ahead, when suddenly a light was seen just before them.

It was a moving light, like a swinging lantern.

At first Frank was puzzled to know what it meant, but finally concluded that it was a signal of some sort.

Suddenly Barney clutched his arm.

"Whist!" he gasped. "Do you hear that, gonsoon?"

Frank did hear it.

Just in their rear down the canyon there came the tramp of horses' feet.

A number of horsemen were coming up the canyon.

That they were a part of the train-robber gang there was no doubt.

Here was a situation which was most perilous. What was to be done?

To remain in their present position meant certain discovery by the train robbers.

There seemed no hiding-place at hand. However, Barney did spy a cavity in the canyon wall and into this they crept.

The light of torches was now seen down the canyon.

Then in this light the figures of men and horses were visible.

Frank even fancied that he recognized the form of Mike Mosely in advance.

Up the canyon came the robber band.

They were evidently just returning from some sort of a plundering expedition.

Frank and Barney watched them breathlessly. Nearer they drew every moment.

Now they were opposite the two crouching men. Frank wondered why they were not seen as the glare of the torches illumined the defile.

But they were not, as it proved, and the cavalcade passed on by them so near that they could have almost touched them.

They were fully fifty men in the party, and they made a formidable array.

They were soon past, however, and then cautiously the two watchers emerged from their concealment.

There was no longer any doubt in Frank's mind that this was the real entrance to the robbers' stronghold.

They proceeded to follow the party at a safe distance up the canyon.

Soon they reached a turn in the defile, and now to their ears came a strange sound.

At first it seemed a dull rumbling like distant thunder.

But Frank's trained hearing told him at once what it was.

It was beyond doubt the falling of water over a height. The roar of the cataract could be plainly distinguished.

"Begorra, Mither Frank," exclaimed Barney, "it's to a river we're coming. I'm aither thinking."

"So it seems," replied Frank.

The horsemen kept straight on. At this point the gorge seemed to take a slight downward trend.

Then by the glare of torches ahead Frank saw the gleam of water.

The ground shook with the weight of this fall.

How high the cataract was, of course Frank was as yet unable to estimate.

But now a strange thing happened. The cavalcade disappeared suddenly and as if by magic.

The spot where they had stood was all blackness.

With their disappearance, the light of the torches had gone, too.

Mystified by the turn in affairs, Frank and Barney stood for a moment irresolute.

Then the young inventor crept forward a brief way.

He came to the foot of the cataract. Against the sky he saw that it was fully fifty feet high.

The river flowed through a gorge which extended at right angles to the dry canyon.

The stream was swift and filled with tortuous rapids.

That horsemen could cross it was out of the question.

Yet that they had done so seemed certain,

for there was no other way for them to take. Frank knew that it was useless for him to try to cross the river at that spot.

"Whurroo!" exclaimed Barney, in mystification. "Pheweriver did the onaduous go to cross over this place, Mither Frank?"

"That is a 'cousin' question," said Frank, completely at a loss to understand the situation.

"I am all at sea in the matter."

"Share, they could niver have crossed through thin swift waters."

"No," agreed Frank. "I don't believe that they could."

"Belobers, they can't jump over it aither."

"No."

"Phewers the drill did they go to, thin, I'd loike to know?"

Frank was as much at a loss to account for the thing as Barney.

It was an unexplainable mystery.

But while they were pondering the matter, a solution came unsought.

Suddenly, from the distance down the canyon, there came the clatter of hoofs.

"Luk out fer yerself!" exclaimed Barney. "Some wad of the divils is coming!"

Both crouched down in the deep shadows. A moment later the horsemen came up the gorge.

For a moment his form was distinguishable against the sky.

Then a strange thing happened.

He rode straight toward the cataract. There was a clattering of hoofs upon slippery stones and a splashing of water and then the rider disappeared.

In a moment Frank sprang from his concealment.

"I have got it!" he cried.

"What?"

"There's a way back of the cataract. They go through to the other side by it."

Then to Barney's amazement Frank advanced to a point where the veil of water was mist like in its thickness.

He boldly passed through it and was out of sight.

"Tare no 'ounds!" gasped the astounded Irishman. "Pheweriver is the meanit' av that! I say, Mither Frank!"

An answer came back in muffled tones:

"Below me, Barney! Come right through the cataract."

"Bejabers, I'm not the wan to stand back!" exclaimed Barney, resolutely. "Here goes, an' may the Mither be with me."

So saying he boldly plunged into the sheet of mist.

In a moment he was upon a broad shelf of rock, with the rocky face of the descent upon one side, and the thundering volume of water upon the other.

There was fully a distance of ten feet between the face of the descent and the falling body of water.

It was an easy matter for man or beast to pass safely through this passage under the cataract.

In a few moments the two explorers had reached the opposite side.

They were a trifle wet from contact with the water, but this did not blinder them in their action.

They were in another canyon similar to the one they had left.

But Frank led the way through it, and they had not gone far when strange sounds were heard.

They came from the distance, and sounded much like the cheering of a large body of men. Seized that they were near the stronghold, Frank and Barney pressed on.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### POMP'S FIGHT IN THE DARK.

POMP, left alone with the Steam Man, was in by no means a cheery frame of mind.

The dark was outrageous enough in open light, but to be left alone at midnight in such close proximity to the haunted canyon, was a state of affairs which jarred upon his nerves.

Sleep was out of the question.

He huddled down in a corner of the cage and

listened to the wonderful sobbing of the night wind.

"Golly, if Marse Frank en' det 'labmans ain' carried off by dem ghostesses dey'll be lucky," he muttered, with a shiver.

Every sound, the breaking of a twig, the cracking of a tree branch, or the whistling of the breeze gave Pomp a fresh shiver.

The minutes seemed to him like whole years of time.

He could not reconcile himself to the unkind fate imposed upon him.

"I don't see whif fo' Marse Frank do such a flur!" he muttered. "Jes' sink how easy fo' dem ghostesses to come right down on dis po' nigger. Dey nout jes' come right through dem lumpholes en' dat would be de end ob Pomp fo' a suthin' fac'."

But as time passed no sign of the ghosts became apparent.

The Steam Man stood silently in the cover of the trees, noiselessly breathing steam and waiting only a touch of the throttle to be off once more.

Suddenly a sound came to Pomp's hearing which aroused him.

It was not a sound to be associated with ghosts or hidden in the sort.

It was the unmistakable beat of horses' hoofs upon the floor of the prairie.

Every moment they drew nearer.

Pomp sprang up.

"Golly!" he muttered. "what am dat? Dey ain't no ghostess."

This was certain, but the dark was quite unable to understand it.

His practiced ear told him that there were fully half a hundred men in the troop whoever they were.

Pomp listened attentively a moment and then arrived at a logical conclusion.

"I reckon de 'lab' niggers that," he muttered.

"Dey am' de' dem had train robbers grime to der hidin'-place."

Nearer the hoofbeats came.

For a moment Pomp fancied that the riders had discovered the Steam Man and were riding down upon it.

But sober second thought disabused his mind of this idea.

A few moments later he could see over the plain, outlined against the sky, the forms of a troop of horsemen.

He had taken the precaution to close the furnace door so that the light from the Steam Man could not be seen.

The troop passed on quickly going toward the pass.

In a few moments they had gone from view entirely.

Pomp drew a breath of relief.

That danger was certainly passed.

What would come next?

The dark had now in part regained his courage. He ventured to once turn the Man's headlight on and illumine the vicinity.

He saw by this a small brook of sparkling water trickling down the mountain side from a clear spring.

He was suddenly smitten with thirst and muttered:

"Golly! I jes' like fo' to get a drink ob dat water. I'm mes' parched to death, I in."

Pomp disliked to risk leaving the Man even for a moment.

Yet he wanted the water bad.

After a time he resolved to make the attempt. First he proceeded to cover all the lights about the Steam Man.

Satisfied that his movements could not be observed by any one in the gloom, Pomp left the cage.

Swiftly he made his way to the spring. He had a drinking cup with him, and filled it.

He drained twice, being very thirsty.

"Ah!" he grunted, after the second draught, "dat am right good watah, an' I can't find no feint wif dat, either. I am jes' glad I risked it."

He did not finish the sentence.

An incident at that moment tended to prove the imprudence of his remarks. He suddenly repeated them.



For he heard a rustling noise behind him, and gave a mighty start.

Pomp tried to turn about, but before he could do so a panther-like form was upon him. Some being, whether human or not, he knew not, with the strength of a giant was upon him.

He made a quick and desperate attempt to throw him off.

But in vain.

The darky was not terrified, for he knew that his antagonist was tangible flesh and blood.

"Huh, dar!" he granted. "What fo' yo' tackle me dat a way fo' Who is yo', I'd jes' like fo' to know!"

But Pomp's unknown assailant did not seem disposed to answer this question.

His sole motive seemed to be to down the darky.

To this treatment Pomp was very much disposed to object.

His hot breath was in the darky's face. He was a very powerful fellow.

But on the other hand, so was Pomp.

The darky's muscles were of steel, and for a moment it was nip and tuck between them.

Pomp had seen the flash of a knife blade in the light.

This he had instinctively feared at first, and had guarded against the blade by clutching his assailant's wrist with one hand.

He held on to it stoutly.

"No, yo' don't do dat!" he spat. "I jes' dak yo' has got hold ob a gentleman who am as strong as yo' dis time."

A deep curse broke from the unknown's lips. It was the first time that he had spoken.

The struggle went on with great fury. For a time neither had the advantage.

Then the unknown by a powerful effort broke Pomp's hold.

He placed a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

A faint halloo came from the mountain side above, and then voices and hurrying footsteps were heard.

Pomp heard this with a thrill.

He knew at once that his foe had friends near, and that he had gained no good.

"Huh! dat won't do yo' no good," cried the darky.

At that moment his fingers closed upon the other's throat.

The struggle was quickly decided.

The unknown assailant strove in vain to break that awful hold. But Pomp did not relax it.

The hurrying footsteps were drawing nearer every moment.

Pomp realized that his time was brief, and he acted with dispatch.

With all of his powerful strength concentrated he forced the unknown to his knees.

There was a dull, gurgling tremor of the frame, and the unknown assailant lay back motionless.

"Golly!" muttered Pomp. "I'd jes' like to know who dat feller am. I jes' dak I takes a look at him."

And thus the darky proceeded to do.

He drew a match from his pocket and lit it. By its rays he saw the features of his man plainly.

They were of a coarse type, and belonged to the order of ruffian.

Pomp made no doubt that he was one of the road robbers who had come upon him by stealth.

The fellow was not yet dead, and already began to show signs of returning consciousness.

Pomp, however, had no desire to take his life.

He dropped his head and then at once left the fellow to be fanned by his friends.

Reaching the cage Pomp sprang in.

It was but a moment's work for him to open the throttle and start the Steam Man from the place.

He was none too quick.

The air was broken with the report of rifles and a large body of the outlaws with wild yells burst from the woods.

Several made an attempt to catch the Steam Man.

"No, yo' don't do dat!" cried Pomp, excitedly. "Not if dis chile knows all about it."

Bullets rattled like hail against the steel netting.

That of course these could not harm the plucky darky.

He kept right on letting the Steam Man have full head. Onto the prairie he went at great speed.

He heard the clatter of hoofs behind him and realized that some of the train robbers were mounting.

But they stood scant show of overtaking the Steam Man, though they gave Pomp a ten mile race.

The darky distanced them, however.

When at length he was satisfied however that he was at a safe distance, he brought the Steam Man to a halt.

Pomp was at a loss now what to do.

If he started to return he would be very likely to run across the train robbers again. To remain where he was was hard, in face of the reflection that Frank and Barney might return at any moment from their expedition up the pass and need him.

"Sakes alive!" muttered the perplexed darky. "Whatbever I gwine to do now?"

The more he thought upon the subject the more perplexed he became.

But the light was already beginning to appear in the east.

"I jes' flink I'll wait a bit fo' de light ob day," concluded Pomp.

It was not long in coming.

But just as the gleaming lances of the sun began to shoot above the eastern horizon Pomp beheld a body of horsemen approaching from the south.

As first the darky was not a little disturbed.

"Golly!" he muttered. "Dat am a berry funny thing. Pears to me dat dey cain't be train robbers coming from that direction."

The darky took Frank's long-distance telescope and began to study them.

He saw that they had sighted the Steam Man, and were making signals with their hands.

As well as he could see, Pomp did not believe that they were of the Mosely gang.

In fact, they looked more like respectable stockmen and men from Pecos City. It required but a brief scrutiny to satisfy Pomp that this was a fact.

"Pon my word," he muttered, "dey looks to dis chile like as how dey was some ob dem Vigilantes what are afiah de train robbers."

Pomp had hit the nail upon the head. Nearer the horsemen drew.

Now Pomp could distinguish their faces, and in the van he saw two men whom he at once recognized.

One was James Rollin and the other was Jack Fair.

Pomp held the Steam Man at a standstill until the band of Vigilantes—for such they were—came up.

Fair rode up to the cage and shouted:

"Hello, Pomp! Where are the others?"

"I donno," replied Pomp, quickly. "Dey lef' me las' night fo' to go up dar in de mountains, an' dey hain't come back yet, or if dey has, I hain't seen 'em, fo' e' big gang ob de robbers down chase me out yar on de prairie."

"Oh, I see," replied Jack. "Frank and Barney are in the hills, ah?"

"Dat's it, ah?"

"They are looking for Mosely's hiding-place, I s'pose?"

"I reckon so, ah?"

"Good enough!"

But Pomp was gazing with wonder at the large body of Vigilantes, fully one hundred and fifty in number.

"Masay sakes! What em yo' gwine to do wif all dem men?" he asked, wonderingly.

"We are going out to help yo' people whip Mosely," replied Jack.

Pomp's face brightened.

"Well, I jes' reckon Merse Frank he be berry glad fo' to see yo'."

"I hope so. We must overtake Mosely and

rescue Katie Rollin before we give up the quest."

The band of Vigilantes cheered. But few more words were said.

It was decided that Pomp should lead the way to the haunted pass which Frank and Barney had started out to explore the night before.

With this plan in view the Steam Man led the way across the plain.

## CHAPTER IX.

### IN THE LIONS' DEN.

FRANK and Barney proceeded with all speed toward the spot where they had heard the great cheering.

Suddenly lights were visible, and then the explorers had a most narrow escape from betrayal.

They were marching along at a rapid though noiseless pace, when suddenly Frank saw a dark form not ten yards before him, in bold relief against the sky.

It was the form of a man, and he carried a rifle over his arm.

It was a sentry, and only one fact saved the two from disaster.

This was the fact that he had been walking his beat in the opposite direction, and his back was turned.

Of course he did not see the two forms behind him.

But he would turn in a moment, and if they remained in their present position they would be seen.

But they did not.

Both shrunk back into shadows.

"Begorra!" muttered Barney, "that was a close shave, Minnie Frank."

"It was," agreed Frank, "but we must get by that sentry in some manner."

"How?"

"Sh! Leave it to me!"

The guard was now advancing toward them at a leisurely pace.

At the end of his beat he paused and seemed to listen.

Then he turned methodically and began to pace back to the other end of the beat.

It was Frank's moment.

"Barney!" he whispered.

"Well, sor?"

"I am going to down that guard if I can. I want you to stand back of me and ready to help me."

"All right, sor."

Frank waited no longer.

He crept up stealthily behind the sentry. In an instant like a panther he sprang forward and fastened his grip about the guard's windpipe.

Frank knew that he must guard against the fellow making an outcry.

All would be lost if he did not succeed in doing this.

The astonished sentry was taken completely by surprise.

He made a brave effort to free himself, but Frank had a wonderful grip.

The young inventor's teeth clenched about his windpipe shut off his breath, and in a few moments this deprivation began to tell.

The fellow reeled, struggled in a futile way, and then sank back insensible.

Frank quickly released his hold, for he did not want to kill the fellow.

Then he drew a handkerchief from his pocket.

Barney was with him by his side.

"Whillet but yez did that in foine ablyte, Mister Frank!"

"We are in luck!" declared the young inventor. "Here, Barney, hold the axles and axles."

Barney tied the fellow's arms behind him with his coat and then secured his ankles with the shoulder strap of his rifle.

Frank by this time had the fellow well gagged.

He had now regained consciousness, but was unable to speak or move a muscle.

Making sure that he could not move, Frank said:

"Now, Barney, the coast is clear."

"All right, sor."

Together they stole along in the shadows. A moment later a remarkable sight was spread out before them.

The canyon seemed to end in what seemed a basin-like sink or depression right in the heart of the hills.

Upon either side rose high planicies of stone, inaccessible to the climber. The canyon seemed the only entrance and exit to this remarkable natural den.

Surely one might have roused those parts for years, ere making the discovery of this obscure place.

In every respect it seemed a wonderful spot for the train robber or road agent.

He was safe from spying eyes, and well defended. It would have required a small army to drive him out of the den.

Lights were hung from the cliff walls about, and various fires lit up the basin.

Vegetation there was none, the surface being exactly like that in the canyon.

But the handihs had brought in boards and timbers and several shanties had been built.

About the campfires Frank and Barney could see numbers of the outlaws lounging.

A few women of the half-breed class were also to be seen.

They were engaged in various culinary pursuits as it was plain to see.

Well! Frank exclaimed, with some admiration, "Mike Macey certainly could not have chosen a better place."

"That's true, sor."

"He has a practically safe retreat here."

"I believe ye, sor."

"Now the question is, Barney, in what part of this den are we to find Katie Rollin?"

The Celt gave a shrill whispered exclamation at that moment.

"Whisht! an' wud yez luk at that!" he said. Frank did look and beheld a thrilling spectacle.

Across the basin in the glare of the campfires he saw two of the half-breed women leading a young girl, evidently a captive.

She was pale, but very beautiful. Long yellow hair fell down upon her shoulders, and her features were delicate and regular.

"By Jove, she is pretty!" said Frank. "Just to think that she is in the power of that inhuman brute!"

"It's too bad, sir!"

"But she shall not be for long. We must rescue her."

"Faith, we'll try hard."

Katie Rollin, for she it was beyond doubt, was led across the open space by the half-breed women.

Near the entrance to the canyon there was a shanty, and to this the young girl captive was led.

She disappeared inside. After some time the women came on.

Frank could hardly wait for action. He would no doubt have devised some plan for entering the shanty in short order but for an incident.

Suddenly two of the train robbers came that way.

They were strolling along at a slow pace and engaged in conversation.

They passed when near Frank and Barney, who were concealed in the shadows, and every word was heard by the two rescuers.

"I tell ye, Bill Smith, that they're gittin' onto Mike bad. They consounded Steam Man has spotted our trade hereabouts."

"I believe ye, Jim. But I don't see Mike think so."

"I know it, an' that's where he makes his mistake."

"I think so."

"In course he does. Don't ye see that Pecan City and Long Pine are settlin' up thickly, an' the more people as come into a place the less chance for us?"

"In course."

"I tell ye we oughter go further west. This was a royal good stand, but we've had our day here. Let's move on, I say."

"So do I."

"I tell ye Mike's makin' a mistake."

"In course he is. Jes' fer instance, keepin'

that yeller haired gal here. What's he want of her?"

"I hear'n Sike Bender say that he reckoned Mike was smit with her and was going to marry her."

"Thunder! Ye don't tell me he's sich a fool!"

"Fact."

"Wall, I'll be blowed! Don't ye know that a woman's at the bottom of all cussedness? If ye let 'em alone they're all right in their place. But when ye go to carryin' 'em off an' tryin' to make 'em marry ye yer alius git the worst of it."

"Sartin!"

"Ye know that gal is sure to have a lover. He'll break his neck to save her, an' the result is they're hunted twice as much as ye would be."

"I agree with ye."

"I tell ye Mike oughter turn over a new leaf."

"Why, sartin. If he don't—I kin tell ye that's no man so good but that's another jest as good to take his place."

"Exactly."

"Now that's the way I look at Mike's case."

"And ye've got the right of it."

"I think so."

"Dead sure. Let's go over and buzz some of the boys."

The two train robbers moved away.

Their words had been a revelation to Frank and Barney.

It had showed conclusively that there was much disaffection among the train robbers just now.

And also that it seemed to spring mainly from an unsuspected cause, namely, the abduction of Katie Rollin.

"Well," mused Frank, after the duo had departed, "I should say that Mike would need to look out for his laurels. It looks to me very much like sedition in the ranks."

"Begone! that's thrue," agreed Barney;

"but, Mither Frank, howver will ye get that girl out of the shanty?"

"Leave that to me," said Frank, quietly.

There was deep shadow in the rear of the shanty.

The train robbers evidently had full confidence in the security of their retreat, for no guard had been placed there.

The coast was clear.

Frank found no trouble whatever in reaching the rear of the shanty.

A small window was within reach. Only a shutter covered it.

It was but a moment's work for the rooms of an observant.

His movements had been quite noiseless, but he felt sure that the room held no other occupant, although he heard a move in the next chamber.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RESCUE.

Frank waited cautiously to make sure that there was no companion with the girl prisoner.

He heard her walk once across the floor. An idea occurred to him.

He went to the partition.

It was a thin affair. He placed his lips to a crack and sent a thrilling whisper in:

"Have courage! A friend is near you!"

He heard a half-stifled scream and then a hasty movement.

"Take courage!" said Frank, again. "I am your friend."

Then an answer came back.

It was the low, husky and melodious voice of the young girl.

"Oh, thank Heaven! Who are you?"

"I'm Frank Reade, Jr."

"I do not know you."

"No, but I am sent by your father and by Jack Farr. I am here to rescue you!"

A stifled cry of joy succeeded.

"Heaven be praised! Oh, where are you now?"

"I am in the next room. I climbed through the window. You must be brave and strong."

"I am. But you must tell me what to do."

"Where is the door to your room?"

"It opens from a passage on this side. I think your door is the same."

"Ah, thank you. Now keep calm and quiet."

Frank felt his way along the partition. In the passageway he ventured to light his pocket lantern.

He now saw the door plainly enough.

It was a thin affair of board, with a common bar of wood as a lock. Frank lifted it and was face to face with Katie Rollin.

But there was no time for any mutual exchange of explanations.

It was necessary to work with the utmost despatch.

All depended upon getting out of the shanty as quickly as possible.

At any moment some one of the half-breed women might come in.

"Follow me!" whispered Frank.

She obeyed implicitly.

Frank led the way into the other chamber and to the window. Barney was already there.

With an apology, Frank lifted the girl's light form and placed her in Barney's powerful grasp.

The Celt deposited her safely and lightly on the ground outside.

So much had been accomplished. But the danger most imminent had not been passed.

There were suspenseful minutes of watching to make sure that the coast was clear.

Then all three stole into the canyon. Once in its shadows, they started with all speed for the cataract.

They passed the bound and gagged sentry on the way.

If they could only reach the Steam Man, Frank knew that the game was won.

That Pomp was yet waiting for them he felt sure. Had he known the truth, his sensations might have been different.

The gray dawn had begun to show itself in the east.

The darkness was lifting, and it was necessary to get out of the canyon at once.

They had reached the cataract, when Katie's strength gave out.

This was a most unfortunate thing, for at this moment startling sounds came down the canyon.

They were loud cries and the sound of hurrying feet.

"My soul!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., excitedly. "They have discovered the guard. We will have to hustle lively now, if we would escape."

"And it is I who am delaying you," said Katie, in distress. "Oh, do not take any risk, but go and leave me."

"Do yez think that as us, mize?" said Barney, reproachfully. "Shurr, Mither Frank is too much of a gentleman for that."

But Frank was trying to find a solution of the difficulty.

He pointed through the wall of mist at the base of the cataract.

The secret way under the cataract was seemingly smooth and no passage deviated from it.

There was not even a crevice or a nook that they might hide in.

Returning, Frank said:

"We must go as far as we can. They will soon be upon us. Barney, you and I must carry the lady."

"All right, sor!"

Of course Katie Rollin's light form was no load for the two men.

But it nevertheless impeded anything like very rapid progress.

Still they made pretty quick time through the cataract.

Arrived upon the other side Barney cast a glance upward and said:

"Be me sowl, Mither Frank, I believe we cud climb up that."

"Where?"

"Shure them are riglar steps alongside the cataract, sor."

Barney was right. When they had come up through the canyon it had of course been very dark.

But it was now quite light, as dawn was rapidly breaking.

Frank saw that up the side of the waterfall the rocks were roughly terraced.

There was no indication that anybody had ever descended them before.

But Frank saw at a glance that it was by no means impossible to do so.

Satisfied of this he said:

"We will try it, Miss Rollin. We will have to ask you to submit to beug lifted up from one step to another."

"Oh, would that I were a moun! I could not give you the trouble," said Katie.

"It is rather a pleasure," said Frank, gallantly.

Barney sprang up on the first ledge.

Frank lifted Katie bodily, and the Celt brought her lightly over the edge. Then Frank also sprang up on the ledge.

In some places a single step would suffice, but in other places the height was fifty four feet, and it was a precarious job to make the ascent.

But though slow and laborious, the feat was accomplished.

Just as the sun rose above the horizon the topmost ledge was reached.

They were now on a level with the brow of the cataract.

It looked a tremendous distance to the foot of the fall.

Even as they stood there above the roar of the waters Frank heard the report of a rifle.

He held up his arm and showed a bullet hole in his sleeve.

"I fear it is none for us here," he said.

"We had better move on."

Then down the canyon fall half a hundred of the train robbers were seen to be coming.

They were furious over the escape of the girl captive.

At their head was Mike Mosely, the personification of fury. They saw the little party at the brow of the cataract.

Just in time they sought the cover of some boulders.

A perfect storm of rifle balls came up the steep. Then the train robbers dashed into the cataract.

Frank knew that once they were upon the other side they would scale the cliff wall and danger most imminent threatened.

He saw that it was a perilous way which led through the hills back of them.

Ordinarily he would not have thought of this, but at once beat a retreat.

But with the exhausted girl upon their hands both felt that they would be speedily overtaken.

Here they had the advantage of the foe. With their repeaters they could hold the terrace for some time.

At least, they could make it very costly for the outlaws.

So Frank filled the magazine of his rifle with cartridges, and said to Barney:

"Don't you think we had better hold them?"

"Bejabers, I kin see no other way, Mither Frank."

"They can't come up here until our cartridges have given out."

"That they can't, sor."

"Then I think we'll stand."

"All right, sor."

Through the cataract came the enraged train robbers.

Upon this side they at once started to scale the terrace. But Frank brought his rifle quickly to his shoulder.

"Now, Barney!"

"All right, sor!"

"Let go!"

Crack-ack!

The two rifles spoke sharply. Two of the train robbers went tumbling down the terrace. The others at first did not heed this.

Crack-ack!

The click of the lever was heard as the magazine worked.

Crack-ack!

Every shot told. It was a frightful sacrifice of life for the train robbers.

Six of their number had been shot down. At this rate, it looked as if the whole band would be decimated.

But Mike Mosely, though incon siderate, was not a fool.

He saw that he was likely to sacrifice all of his men.

Then a voice of thunder, he gave the order to fall back.

The train robbers sought refuge among rocks in the defile.

Then a desultory skirmish was kept up. But the party above had the advantage.

They had not received a scratch thus far, and did not seem likely to. They were completely protected.

"Bejabers, I guess we have the best of the spalpeens!" cried Barney.

"It looks like it," agreed Frank.

"My Heaven aid us!" said Katie, fervently.

"It is my prayer."

After an hour of this sort of fighting, suddenly the stentorian voices of Mosely were heard.

"If ye will surrender," he shouted, "we'll give ye yer lives! What do ye say?"

Frank was more than amused at the cool assurance of the villain.

He exchanged winks with Barney, and then replied:

"This is a very generous offer for a man like you."

"I'll stand by it," replied Mosely. "I'm a man of my word."

"I should judge that you were, and a man for yourself, too."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Is it not plain?" retorted Frank.

"I don't feel like foolin'" said the train robber, angrily.

"Ye must understand that it's not easy for ye to be easy for ye to escape. No outsider ever went out of these hills alive."

"We ask no quarter, nor will we give any!" replied Frank, sternly. "We decline your offer."

This settled the question. Mosely threatened and roared and scorned.

Frank felt that he could stand the siege as long as the train robbers. So time went by rapidly.

To attempt to retreat while the foe was in this position Frank knew would be fatal.

So they remained where they were.

The hours passed slowly until the sun announced that it was high noon.

"I don't see why Pomp don't show up with the Steam Man," said Frank, impatiently.

"I should think that he would take a run up this way anyway, since we have been about so long."

"Bejabers, I think it's afraid of the ghosts he is," said Barney.

"What a foolish idea," cried Frank. "I have no patience with him."

But the sun began to decline in the sky and still no relief came.

It was beginning to grow monotonous, and Frank had begun to think of accepting desperate chances and beat a retreat.

The robbers remained bold in silence. When their game was Frank had no means of knowing.

Suddenly Barney started up and exclaimed:

"Shure, Mither Frank, did ye hear that sound?"

"What?" asked Frank.

"Why, it sounded, bit like the wheels of the wagon drawn by the Steam Man."

"Pahaw! No such good luck as that," said Frank.

But the words had barely left his lips when he repeated them. Up the gorge shrill and clear came a sharp, piercing note.

It was the Steam Man's whistle.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A RICH DISCOVERY.

POMP, in the Steam Man, was leuding the way across the plain for the Vigilantes to the stronghold of Mike Mosely.

The darky felt sure that he could take the party very accurately to the mouth of the pass.

But he was bound to discover how easy it is to make a mistake.

Jack Fair and James Rollin rode at the head of the Vigilantes.

The Steam Man kept along at a pace with which the horses kept up easily.

For a time it was easy work, for the trail was quite plain.

But suddenly they came to a stretch of the prairie where for a long distance the ground was hard and flinty.

Here it became quite impossible to find the trail.

Not a cottage of it could be discovered.

At length the quest was abandoned.

Pomp believed that he could find the pass easily enough, however, and a direct line was taken for the hills.

In due course of time they were reached, but the spot was some ways from the Haunted Pass.

In vain Pomp looked for the pass. At length a defile was found which the darky believed to be it.

This supposition was strengthened by the fact that, as they approached, a single horseman was seen to dash into it.

At once Jack Fair arose in the stirrups, and cried:

"Forward, boys! Let us hunt the villains down!"

The Vigilantes gave a cheer and rode forward at full speed.

Into the pass they went. But a surprise was in store for them.

Suddenly and without warning there was the crash of firearms, and several of the band fell from the saddle.

The next moment down the pass came a band of armed men riding at full speed.

It was evidently their intention to charge the Vigilantes.

Indeed, so sudden was the attack, that the Vigilantes had hardly time to prepare for resistance.

The ranks were split and the outlaws in part swept completely through and out of sight below.

So astonished were the Vigilantes that for a moment they could not act.

Then Jack wheeled his horse and shouted:

"After them, boys! Don't let them escape!"

Down the pass after the train robbers went the Vigilantes.

They rode out of it and upon the plain, but the bold riders had disappeared.

Not one of them was in sight.

Here was a mystery.

But there was not time to attempt its solution. Jack turned his horse up the pass.

He felt sure that it led to the train robbers' stronghold.

"Forward!" he cried; "we will ferret out the dogs in this time."

Pomp, in the Steam Man, had remained in the pass.

He now went ahead at as rapid a pace as possible; but a great surprise was in store.

Suddenly the pass was seen to come to an end in a blank wall of stone.

For a distance upward of several hundred feet it rose in an impenetrable and impassable.

It was now understood readily enough why the outlaws charged down the pass and through the Vigilantes' ranks.

They had been driven into a trap, and it was their only method of escape.

It was a dampening realization to the Vigilantes, but there was no way but to make the best of it.

"We will hunt them down yet!" cried Jack Fair, confidently. "Come on, boys! Follow me!"

The daring youth would have started away

down the pass at a breakneck pace at that moment.

But a sharp cry from one of the Vigilantes arrested the attention of all.

"Don't be so sure that this is a blind canyon!" he cried. "Look here!"

He leaped from his horse and lifted a network of vines which grew against the face of the cliff.

A cave was revealed.

It was an astonishing discovery, and at once created a sensation.

"A cave!" cried Jack Fair, with amazement.

"That is queer."

"But that don't stand for anything," said Rollin, impatiently. "We have no time for the exploration of caves. Let us be off."

"Wait!" cried Jack, leaping from his horse.

"Come, Jack, don't delay us," cried Rollin.

"But it is necessary to investigate this matter," declared Jack.

"Pshaw, it is only a cave!"

"That is true!"

"It has nothing to do with our work. Come along."

"I think you are wrong, Mr. Rollin."

"How so?"

"This cave may be the means of entrance to the robbers' retreat."

"Pshaw! I don't believe a word of it. You can find no trail leading into it."

"Yet the robbers may have just emerged from it. This sort of ground does not show a trail."

"Well, I will not say that you are wrong," said Rollin, dismounting. "If you really think so let us investigate."

"I think it worth while!"

The two leaders of the Vigilantes approached the entrance to the cave.

All was dark as Erebus within. A lantern, however, was produced.

Lighting this, Jack entered the place. Rollin followed him.

Pomp was anxious to do the same, but he could not very well leave the Steam Man.

Upon entering the cave the two men were impressed with one fact.

This was that the place seemed musty and undisturbed, as if no human being had ever entered it.

Its formation was most peculiar.

The floor of the cave was a peculiar spongy earth. The walls and roof were of quartz.

Jack swept the place with his lantern. This revealed the presence of a number of passages leading into the mountain.

If the cave were to be explored it was hard to tell which of these to take.

But in the beginning Jack saw the utter futility of such a move.

He was satisfied at once that this was not the entrance to the robbers' stronghold.

As this was what he was looking for, he could see no reason for wasting further time here.

"No use, Rollin," he cried, "we are on the wrong scent."

"So I thought!" declared the other.

"Well, I am satisfied. Let us be off!"

Jack had turned to leave the cave, when he saw a curious bit of brightness at his feet in the black dirt.

He reached down, and picked up what looked to him to be a large and weighty pebble.

It was really a small nugget of gold. At sight of it, and realizing its true nature, Jack felt a strange thrill.

"By Jove!" he gasped, "look here, Mr. Rollin. See what I have found!"

Rollin took the nugget in his hand.

"Gold!" he exclaimed, in a tense voice.

"My soul, this is a big discovery, Jack."

It may be that there is more about the cave!

"No doubt of it. Let us look!"

Nothing was said to the other members of the Vigilant party.

Jack and Rollin examined the dirt on the cavern floor closely.

The shining particles in it did not deceive Jack, who had some experience in gold seeking.

"Heaven!" he exclaimed. "It is pay dirt and the richest I have ever seen. I'll wager there is a fortune here. This is better than raising stock, Mr. Rollin."

Rollin was quite pale with excitement.

"It means that our fortunes are made!" he murmured. "My soul, Jack, we are rich."

Jack flashed his lantern against the quartz walls of the cave's sides.

He gave an exclamation as he did so.

Something glittering was in the quartz. It was gold, and a heavy vein of it extended through the quartz.

The place was a literal gold mine.

It was a find which for a moment caused them to forget their duties and the real object of their mission hither.

For a time they discussed the subject in the greatest of excitement. It was somehow before Jack was suddenly brought back to a realization of the present.

"My soul!" he gasped. "We are wasting time here. What is all this wealth to us now that Katie is in the hands of that wretch, Mike Mosely?"

"Right!" cried Rollin, springing up. "We must rescue Katie first. Pray Heaven that we may!"

They rushed out of the cavern.

The Vigilant head was waiting for them on the outside.

Neither took the pains to tell of their mighty discovery. They sprang to saddles, and Rollin cried:

"Come on. Let us hunt Mosely and his gang to the death!"

The Vigilantes, with a cheer, dashed away down the canyon, following their two leaders.

Pomp, with the Steam Man, followed them.

"Golly!" muttered the darky, "I jes' wish I could find dat ar pass wif dem ghostsees. I jes' fink Marse Frank an' Barney hab jus' been carried off by dem fings. Huh! don't want nuffin' to do wif ghostsees."

He sent the Steam Man along after the Vigilantes at a rattling pace.

Down the canyon they went.

Suddenly Pomp closed the throttle with an exclamation. Some sort of a ruction was in progress below.

It seemed that a party of train robbers had been lying in wait at the mouth of the pass for the Vigilantes and had attacked them.

The crack of rifles and the yells of the contestants hurt upon the air.

## CHAPTER XIL

### POMP'S FIGHT WITH THE BEAR.

POMP was for a moment very much in doubt what to do.

He knew that the Vigilantes were having some sort of a ruction at the mouth of the pass with the train robbers.

The darky's natural impulse was to go to the assistance of his friends.

He had even made up his mind to do this, when a strange thing happened.

Suddenly there was a savage roar and a great fall of stone into the canyon.

Then, upon a shelf of rock just above him, Pomp was horrified to see a monster grizzly bear.

It would have seemed foolish for the darky to have felt fear, protected as he was by the wire cage.

But to one familiar with the grizzly bear and its tremendous power of muscle this would not have seemed so strange.

The grizzly was a monster of its species.

It clung to the ledge of rock, and regarded the Steam Man in an aggressive manner.

To the bear this was an invader of his stronghold, and it irritated him.

A deep, hoarse growl came from the brute's mouth. It was so deep and fearful that it seemed almost to make the ground tremble.

Pomp could have opened the throttle and sent the Man down the pass and out of the way.

But he did not do so he could never afterwards explain.

He really did not what was the most foolish thing for him to do.

This was to take his rifle and fire at the brute.

The bullet struck the bear upon the thick part of the skull.

Of course it glanced off without doing any harm other than that of scraping the skin from the bone.

It had the effect of maddening the big brute.

Too late Pomp saw his mistake.

"Golly!" he muttered. "I jes' fink I've done de wrong fink. Dat bear kin make it trownions fo' me."

He sprang to the throttle to open it, but the bear leaped down from his perch and was crouching up the canyon on his hind legs.

Straight for the Steam Man the bear came like a whirlwind.

The next moment there was a collision.

The bear's huge form struck the Man full force and his arms encircled the Man's body.

It is a bear's first impulse to hug, and this specimen of the shaggy tribe was no exception.

He threw both forelegs about the Steam Man. Pomp did not dare to open the throttle for fear that the resistance might strain or injure some of the delicate machinery.

But the darky knew what the result of the hug would be.

Of course the Steam Man's body was hot as steam and a hot furnace could make it.

In an instant the air was full of the aroma of burning hair and bear meat.

For a few moments the big brute stood it and tried to crush his iron adversary.

Then he suddenly sickened of his bargain. With a howl of pain and anger he relaxed his hold.

That bear was a sight to see. The hair was completely singed from his belly and breast and his forearms.

In many places the flesh had been literally cooked like a steak. It was a sorry experience for the bear.

Pomp roared with laughter.

In spite of the danger of the moment the darky had to give way to the indelicacy of the situation.

It was too funny for anything. At least so thought the darky.

But the next moment the matter took a more serious slant.

Big brin suddenly made a howl at his fiery antagonist with his paw.

It was a terrific one, such as an eight hundred pound bear can give and with full force.

It struck the Steam Man just above the steam chest.

For a moment there was a straining of the bolts and the sudden rush of steam, and Pomp in his terror fancied that the Man was about to blow up.

He opened the escape valve and sent a terrific jet of steam full in the bear's face.

Then, with quick wit, he pulled the whistle valve.

The shriek which went up on the air was a fearful one, and staggered the bear.

But at that moment the calamity was intensified in a brilliant manner.

Suddenly upon the same ledge above, another bear appeared. And now Pomp saw, just behind the big brute, that there was still another bear.

There seemed to be a cave in the side of the hill at this point, and it was from this, evidently, that the monster brutes had come.

Pomp now experienced genuine alarm. He saw that the position was one of great peril.

"Golly!" he muttered. "What am dis chile gwine to do? I jes' fink dem big bears will break de Steam Man all to pieces."

The darky saw that the scorched bear was coming again to the attack, and he realized that another blow from the brute's big paw might do great harm.

Pomp did not mean that this should come if he could help it.

But what was to be done?

This was a serious question.

But in face of a dilemma Pomp was ever ready and quick to act. He grasped the throttle valve firmly and turned the Man square about.

This brought the rear of the cage to face the bears.

The Pomp knew the big brutes could do no harm to.

The plucky ducky seized his rifle, and going to the loop-hole opened fire upon the foe.

The rifle spoke sharply and bullets flew as fast as Pomp could work the lever of the repeater.

He did not fire, however, without good aim.

The big bear whose shaggy fur had been lamed by the contact with the Steam Man succumbed to a shot through the heart.

One of the others by a lucky chance received a bullet in the eye which penetrated to the brain.

This left only one bear to face the plucky ducky, whose courage at once rose wonderfully. "Golly sakes!" he exclaimed. "Dis am jes' de biggest 'ting dis chile hab done for one white. I jes' reckon dat two grizzlies at one time am a record de best 'nater round yer kaln't beat mesh."

But the danger was not yet over by any means.

There was still another grizzly to meet, and Pomp did not relax his vigilance or determination.

He fired about after shot at the big brute.

The bear's skull was literally torn up by the leaden balls. Yet not one penetrated to the brain.

But a singular result was produced. Some nerve must have been destroyed which was in sympathy with the eyes, for the bear seemed suddenly to become blind.

The big brute went reeling about the canyon in a drunken manner, running into this object and that in a blind and reckless fashion.

Pomp saw the point at once and that he was able to take advantage of it. This he did.

He started the Steam Man forward and went past the bear like a flash.

A short distance below he turned the man about and then went on down the canyon, saving the two dead bears and the blind one behind.

The ducky felt much elated at his fortunate escape from what might have been quite a serious affair for the Man.

Down the canyon the Man went.

When first attacked by the bears Pomp had heard the sounds of firing at the mouth of the canyon.

But now three sounds had died out. It seemed as if the battle had come to an end.

The ducky experienced a thrill of doubt and fear.

Why had come off victorious?

If it had been the cowboys, then no doubt they would be lying in wait for him.

This put Pomp on his mettle.

He proceeded to keep a sharp lookout ahead.

Down the gorge he went.

The Steam Man was now but a few yards from the mouth of the canyon. The next moment the level plain burst into view.

And now it was in order for Pomp to be surprised.

The vicinity was deserted.

Not a sign of the combatants was to be seen. Vigilants and cowboys had alike disappeared.

It was a most astonishing discovery. What did it mean?

The ducky brought the Man to a halt and looked about him in wonderment.

"Hah!" he grunted. "Dat am de very funnest ting I ober heerd ob in all my life. I jes' sink de zornn' couldn't open and swallow dem all up agin. Dat am plainly out ob de question."

And yet the ducky was bound to admit that all had disappeared, friend and foe alike.

There was but one conclusion to arrive at. "Either dey heb come whipped de Vigilance an' jes' carried dem off prisoners," he muttered, "or else de Vigilance hab whipped dem an' jes' gone away fo' to rescue Marse Frank an' Barney."

But second thought would not permit the ducky to accept this conclusion.

"No," he rejoined, "I don't believe a w'd ob dat. I jes' reckon dey hab whipped our boys, fo' if not dey would hab waited fo' me, dat am sash."

It was a most dampening reflection to Pomp.

But the ducky was as brave as ever. Nothing in the line of adversity would ever seem to affect his courage.

"Dat am 'right," he concluded. "I jes' sink dis chile hab his liberty an' he kin rescue Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney jes' de same. I jes' try fo' to do it anyhow."

He started the Steam Man along the base of the mountain.

But he had not gone far when his attention was arrested by a peculiar sight.

This was a straight column of smoke rising above a belt of timber not three miles out over the plain.

Pomp brought the Steam Man to a halt.

He viewed the distant smoke for some time with evident interest. Then he shrugged his shoulders and changed the course of the Steam Man.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### REUNITED.

Pomp changed the course of the Steam Man directly for the distant line of smoke.

"Golly," he muttered, "with wide open eyes."

But an berry likely where de train robbers hab gotted der prisoners. Mos' likely dey hab camped dere."

If this was a fact, as Pomp hoped, then the ducky perceived that it was his duty to push ahead and attack the foe.

Of course, he was one against many, but he had the Steam Man and the open plain before him.

He did not believe by any means that he could cope successfully with the robbers.

But he knew full well that he could bester them much and give them no little trouble.

This he was determined to do.

Accordingly, the Steam Man was sent forward at a rapid gait across the plain.

Nearer every moment the timber line drew, and as it came nearer, Pomp began a wide detour, with an idea of wholesome precaution.

He went to the eastward of the timber, and as he began the detour he was aware of the wisdom of his action.

Suddenly from the line of trees there came a volley of rifle balls.

They patterned all about the cage, but, of course, did no harm.

Pomp sent up a defiant whistle from the Steam Man's whistle.

It was a short, sharp note, ear-splitting in its intensity. It was a challenge which, however, the train robbers seemed immediately to accept.

For out of the timber there suddenly dashed a mounted body of men.

Straight for the Steam Man they came.

It was a welcome sight to Pomp, who danced break-down on the floor of the wagon.

"Set on dey come with whirlwind speed. They seed determined to overtake and capture the Man."

Pomp was well aware how easy it would be for him to give the villains the cold shoulder.

He kept the Steam Man at a slow pace at first.

This allowed the train robbers to gain very rapidly on the Man.

Very soon they were almost upon him.

Then Pomp let the throttle fly open, and the Man began to move away from the speeding horsemen.

The advantage lay in the fact that the horses dived while the Man did not.

Even then the train robbers did not seem to realize the futility of their efforts to capture the Man.

Pomp became well assured of two things.

One was that this was not the main body of the train robbers.

The second was that they were not any part of the band which had fought the Vigilants.

The ducky concluded very soon that they were a party just returning from a raid, and that they had camped in the timber rather than enter the hills, for what reason it was not yet quite apparent.

In vain the gang tried to overtake the Man.

Pomp resorted to tactics by means of which one man might easily win a hundred.

These were to keep just ahead of the foe and make a wide circle on the plain.

This kept the foe ever in pursuit, and from the rear of the wagon Pomp had no trouble in leisurely picking them off as he pleased.

Sift on came the gang.

And the ducky's rifle cracked with unerring regularity.

Man after man dropped from the saddle and fell dead upon the plain.

And yet for a long while the persistent onslaught did not seem to see the error they were committing.

When they did and were made aware of the futility of their attempt to capture the Man, their rage knew no bounds.

They dismounted on their horses and made the air ring with the bitter yell and curses.

But Pomp was as serene as could well be imagined.

"Golly!" he chuckled, as he brought the Steam Man down. "Dis chile jes' taught dem a bit ob der nater dem dat time, fo' mesh. I jes' reckon dey ain't want to mo' ob de Steam Man."

And Pomp was right.

The train robbers had received a bitter lesson. They gave up the chase at once.

They made a break for the timber again.

Pomp thundered along in their rear.

He did not attempt to run them down, but got in shots with such regularity that the train robbers were very glad to reach the timber.

Into this they dashed.

Pomp now brought the Man down to a standstill.

The ducky was now in somewhat of a quandary as to what to do.

But at that moment, as fate hid it, he caught sight of a body of horsemen galloping along the base of the hills.

It required but a glance for him to recognize them.

He was deeply thrilled.

"Golly! dat am de Vigilance, an' dey am lookin' fo' me!" he cried.

This seemed certainly to be a fact.

It would seem then that after all the Vigilants had not been annihilated by the train robbers.

On the other hand, it looked as if they had given the train robbers a chase, and were returning to the plain to look for Pomp.

"Mussy sakes, dere dey go into de pass!" cried the ducky, with agitation. "Don't dey see dis chile out yere?"

But it seemed that they had not seen the Steam Man out on the plain.

They had certainly gone back into the pass.

There seemed but one thing for Barney to do.

Of course, this was to follow the Vigilants.

He sent the Steam Man ahead at a rapid pace.

He pulled the whistle, but the wind was in the wrong direction, and its notes did not reach the ears of the Vigilants.

On toward the pass went the Steam Man.

Suddenly Pomp became aware of a startling fact.

Chancing to turn his head, he saw that the train robbers had come out of the timber and were trailing him.

The ducky only chuckled and kept right on.

Soon the mouth of the pass was reached, and without a moment's hesitation he went on.

Up the pass the Steam Man went.

Just as he turned a bend in the gorge, Pomp saw the Vigilants before him.

At once he pulled the whistle valve, and the Vigilants turned in their saddles.

At sight of the Steam Man a sensation was created.

Of course they halted, and turned to greet Pump.

Jack Fair rode up to the cage as Pump brought the Man to a stop.

"Well, Pump, old man!" cried the young man, "where did you come from?"

Pump opened the cage door.

"Golly fo' glory, Marse Fair!" he cried, "I 's'ee 'em come from de penitentiary."

"From the penitentiary?"

"Yes, sah."

"But—how is that?"

"Dat's a fact, sah."

"Well, well, how could that happen? We left you in this pass."

"Dat am right, Marse Fair, but I done folly yo' down de pass, an'—"

"And what?"

Pump's eyes were roaming about in quest of the big bears with which he had such a reputation.

Suddenly he espied the carcass of one some distance up the pass.

"Dere dey an'," he cried, "Yo' see dat big 'lar' up der? Well, I 's'ee 'em had a big fight wif free ob dem fings."

"Three gristlies?" gasped Jack.

"Yes, sah."

"And you killed them all?"

"Two ob dem, sah. De oder one got blind in his eyes, an' I 's'ee 'em him here to go on an' do yo' ob, sah."

"Ah, why did you not succeed in finding us?"

"Why, 's'ee 'em because dat when dis chile got down to de most ob de pass yo' wasn' 'lar'."

"Ah, I understand," said Jack. "We pursued the villains into another pass just beyond this."

Pump's eyes opened wide.

"Yo' did?"

"Yes."

"Maybe it was de pass dat de ghostesses was in an' where Marse Frank an' Barney hal' gone."

"I dare say."

"'s'ee yo' show dis chile where dat am, please."

"All right, but first finish your story. Where did you go after you found that we were not at the mouth of the pass?"

"Golly, I 's'ee 'em looked all about fo' yo'."

"Yes."

"Well, I didn't find yo'. Den I seen a big line ob smoke 's'ee ober in a bit ob timber dar."

"Well?"

"I 's'ee 'em ober dar, an' when I gets dar I finds out dat dey am de train robbers. I 's'ee gits dem a lilly bit ob a chase. Den I sees yo' comin' along de foot ob de mountain an' sees yo' come into dis pass agin."

"I understand now," cried Jack. "Well, Pump, I think we shall soon be able to find your master. We will follow to leave this pass at once. You will go on?"

"Yes, sah."

Then Jack turned to Rollin and said:

"Come, we have no time to lose. Let us go ahead."

"I'm ready!" cried Rollin.

Every man was called to saddle and the start was made.

Down the canyon they went at full speed.

Pump followed with the Steam Man. But just as the mouth of the canyon was reached a thrilling thing occurred.

Jack rode in advance, and he was much surprised as suddenly a band of armed men appeared at the mouth of the canyon.

They were train robbers, as he saw at a glance.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE END.

The train robbers had waylaid the Vigilantes at the mouth of the pass.

In a moment a lively battle was in progress. The train robbers attacked their foes with deadly fury. The battle at once became a terrific one.

Shots were quickly exchanged and men began to fall from their saddles.

The force of the train robbers seemed very much larger than that of the Vigilantes.

Yet the latter, urged on by the daring and pluck of Jack and Rollin, made a brave fight.

Pump all this while had been in the rear.

The Jark was chafing for an opportunity to take part in the fray.

Now the chance seemed to have been offered. There was a break in the Vigilantes' ranks.

The darky opened the Steam Man's throttle and sent him ahead at a tremendous rate of speed.

Of course there was some risk in doing this, but Pump had counted the chances well.

The mechanism of the Steam Man was of a delicate order and easily deranged. But the darky knew that a desperate move had got to be made.

The Vigilantes were getting decidedly the worst of the battle, and if they were to suffer defeat it would be a serious thing for Katie Rollin as well as for Frank and Barney.

Therefore, Pump was prompted to take more chances than he would have ordinarily thought safe.

He opened the throttle and sent the Steam Man forward.

The ranks of the Vigilantes separated to let the iron monster through.

It was like an ancient chariot charge upon a Roman phalanx. The train robbers saw the monster coming.

But they did not retreat.

They stood their ground bravely while the Steam Man descended upon them like a thunderbolt.

Driven at such terrific speed, nothing in the shape of men or horses could withstand the attack of such a monster.

In a twinkling horses were thrown; men were trampled under the iron feet of the Steam Man.

Straight through the ranks of the train robbers the Steam Man swept.

The result was demoralizing in the extreme. The train robbers were separated as with a knife.

This gave the Vigilantes a splendid chance to turn the tide of defeat into victory.

With the train robbers in this state of confusion Jack Fair gave the order to charge.

Down upon the foe the Vigilantes swept like a fury, to wait the train robbers tried to close their ranks.

They were scattered like chaff and shot down in great numbers by the Vigilantes.

The Steam Man under Pump's skillful manipulation, chased the fleeing robbers like a terrible Nemesis.

In less time than it takes to tell the gang was entirely broken up and scattered into the hills.

The Vigilantes were elated with their victory, and made the air ring with their cheers.

But the Steam Man came in for its share of the agony and Pump felt justifiably proud.

"I 's'ee 'em de reputations am't in it with de Steam Man!" cried Pump, in jubilation.

"Dey 's'ee 'em bettah steer clear ob dis chile."

But the question now arose as to what move it was best to make next.

It was discussed by Pump, Jack Fair and Rollin at some length.

"I 's'ee 'em if I end find dat harted canyon dat it would be de best 's'ee I end do!" declared Pump.

"Do you think that it would lead to Moseley's den?" asked Jack.

"I donno anything about dat," replied Pump.

"But I 's'ee 'em know dat I 's'ee Marse Frank an' Barney dar, an' dey may be waitin' fo' me yet."

"Oh, I see!" said Jack. "Well, you should try to find it just as soon as you can, Pump."

"I will so 's'ee."

"Of course, and we will go along with you. It is not unlikely that they have made some discovery by this time that will be of great advantage to us all."

"A right, sah. I wud like to hab yo' go, if yo' will."

"I will," replied Jack.

So the matter was settled. The Man led the way along the base of the hills for some distance.

Then suddenly Pump turned the Steam Man into a small opening between two high spurs of the mountain wall.

At once the place assumed a familiar aspect. The Haunted Pass was found.

But there was no sign of Frank or Barney. Pump went to the spot where he had left them.

They had not been there so far as he could discover. He made a thorough but ineffectual search of the vicinity.

"I 's'ee 'em den ghostesses hab done got dem fo' snah!" he declared, despairingly.

"Whatever will dis chile do?"

It was certainly quite a hard position for the darky.

But he soon decided upon a way out of the difficulty with Jack's aid.

"You say that your men went into the canyon?" he asked.

"Yes, sah."

"Well, why not go after them?"

"Dat am de berry best way, I finks," declared Pump.

He was not in such great fear of ghosts in broad daylight and with the band of Vigilantes with him.

So it was decided to follow the canyon to its end.

Jack and Rollin had firm faith that it led to Moseley's den, after hearing the account given by Pump.

So the start was made.

But they had just entered the canyon, when startling sounds came to their ears.

They were the distant rifle shots exchanged by Frank and Barney and the outlaws.

"Hurrah!" cried Jack Fair. "There they are! Forward!"

Pump was overjoyed.

"Golly," he cried, "dat am Marse Frank an' de 'ishman, fo' snah."

With this he pulled the whistle valve and sent up a sharp call.

It was this which Barney and Frank had heard at the critical time depicted in a previous chapter.

Up the canyon went the Vigilantes and the Steam Man.

Soon they came to the cataraet, and the situation was taken in at a glance.

The train robbers in the pass were routed by the Vigilantes and driven beyond the cataraet.

Then Frank and Barney and Katie Rollin came down from their elevated perch.

The meeting between Katie and her father was most affecting. Jack Fair soon had the pleasure of clasping his betrothed in his arms.

It was a happy reunion, but as there was exciting work before them the men could not give much time to the exchanging of experiences.

Katie was left with Pump in the wagon. Then Barney and Frank showed the Vigilantes the way to the den of the canyon stream.

The Vigilantes all passed under the cataraet safely.

It was determined to give the train robbers a bitter lesson.

If possible the Vigilantes would wipe them out of existence.

A good beginning had been made and the chances were favorable.

The stronghold, could not be defended by a great number of the robbers, for the most of them were in the large party met upon the plain and defeated there.

With the den of the train robbers broken up, it certainly looked reasonable that their career might be checked.

The main idea was to capture Mike Moseley, the leader.

If he could be dealt summarily with the hand might be broken up with more ease. So it was determined to if possible capture Moseley.

But there was great consternation in the outlaw camp when it was known that they were to be attacked.

Moseley himself was there, with but a handful of men. The Vigilantes barred upon them with fury.

The battle was a short and decisive one.

The outlaws were driven to the wall and obliged to surrender.

Moseley himself held up his hands and allowed his captors to bind him.

Then the camp was overhauled and much of the money stolen from the mail trains in previous raids was recovered.

It was a signal victory, and yet all acknowledged that the greatest credit was due Frank Reade, Jr.'s party and the Steam Man.

Without their able assistance no doubt the project would have failed.

At last the train-wrecking gang, the terror of that branch of the Southern Pacific, had been wiped out.

Mike Moseley, whose name was a synonym of terror to all in that part of Texas was in limbo.

Certainly, Frank Reade, Jr., and Pomp and Barney had good reason to feel elated with the success of their enterprise.

One more achievement had been added to the list of the Steam Man's famous feats.

The world would hear of it, and the fame of Frank Reade, Jr., and his wonderful inventions would increase.

It was certainly a gratifying reflection. All were in the spirit.

The stronghold of the train robbers was thoroughly broken up. The most of them were taken to Pecos City as prisoners, there to await the action of the law.

When Moseley was taken thither it was necessary to surround the jail with armed men to prevent the escape from inaugurating a Judge Lynch affair.

The villain was tried and sentenced to death on the charge of murder in the first degree.

Thus his crimes were expiated, and Pecos City and Lone Pine were once more free from

the pest which had afflicted the region for so long.

Frank Reade, Jr., and the Steam Man left Pecos City with the warmest gratitude of the Impulsive Texans. Once more safe in Bessie-town all could look back with a degree of keen satisfaction to their experiences in successfully exterminating Mike Moseley's gang of train robbers.

The gold mine discovered by Jack Fair and Rollin made them immensely wealthy. Jack and Katie are soon to be married.

And this ends our story of the Steam Man's exploits in Texas. But the work of Frank Reade, Jr.'s wonderful invention was by no means over, and a new mission was soon in hand, the thrilling details of which may be found in No. 192 of the FRANK READE LIBRARY, entitled:

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